TELOS

Number 103 SPRING 1995

Special Issue on Populism I

Articles

Piccone & Ulmen: Populism and the New Politics
P-A Taguieff: Political Science Confronts Populism
Paul Piccone: Postmodern Populism
Tim Luke: Postmodern Populism and Ecology
Paul Gottfried: Reconfiguring the Political Landscape
Larry Greene: Black Populism

Notes and Commentary

Roger Bartra: Mexican Reflections on Distorted Images
Emery M. Roe: Sustainable Development and Populism
Jesse Walker: Responses to the Somalia Crisis
Hugh Murray: Balance or Justice? Reply to Ost
Ivan Ascher: The Resilience of Left and Right
Marco Tarchi: In Search of Right and Left

Review

Frank Adler: The Decline of the French Left

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Telos

A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought

Editor: *Paul Piccone* Notes Editor: *Florindo Volpacchio*
Book Review Editor: *Michael Taves* Managing Editor: *William Bergman*

Editorial Associates: *Frank Adler, John Alt, Russell Berman, John Bokina, Robert D'Amico, Eva Geulen, Paul Gottfried, Moishe Gonzales, Loren Goodman, David Gross, Warren Habib, Russell Jacoby, Tim Luke, John Michael, Magda Mueller, David Ost, David Pan, Eric S. Richardson, Gabor Rittersporn, Michael Taves, G. L. Ulmen, Donald Warren, Victor Zaslavsky.*

Art Director: *Amanda Trager*

*****

Subscription Rates

One-year Individual . . . $35.00	One-year Institutional $90.00
Two-years Individual . . . $70.00	Two-years Institutional. . . .$180.00

(Foreign Subscribers, including Canadians, add 15%)

*****

Back Issues available: ns. 13, 17-18 20-51, 53-102 at $13.00 each ($30.00 for institutions). Foreign orders, add 15%. All payments must be in U.S. currency. Out of print issues (ns. 1-12, 14-16, 19, 52) can be obtained in microform or facsimile through University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106, US.

Telos number 103 corresponds to Vol. 28, No. 1. ***Telos*** is published in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter by Telos Press Ltd., 431 E. 12th Street, New York, NY 10009. Second Class postage paid at New York and additional mailing offices. Postmaster please send address changes to:

Telos
431 E. 12th Street
New York, NY 10009

© 1995, Telos Press Ltd.

ISSN 0090-6514 tel. 212-228-6479

Unsolicited manuscripts will be considered only if the author provides at least three clean, finished copies conforming to the appropriate Telos style, or on IBM-compatible computer diskette. Allow at least three months for editorial evaluation. Manuscripts accepted for publication which undergo considerable editing will be sent back to authors for final approval. Rejected manuscripts will be recycled.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TELOS

A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought

Number 103 **Spring 1995**

Special Issue on Populism I

Articles

Populism and the New Politics 3
Paul Piccone and Gary Ulmen

Political Science Confronts Populism:
From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem 9
Pierre-André Taguieff

Postmodern Populism 45
Paul Piccone

Searching for Alternatives:
Postmodern Populism and Ecology 87
Tim Luke

Reconfiguring the Political Landscape 111
Paul Gottfried

Black Populism and the Quest for Racial Unity 127
Larry A. Greene

Notes and Commentary

South of the Border:
Mexican Reflections on Distorted Images 143
Roger Bartra

Critical Theory,
Sustainable Development and Populism 149
Emery M. Roe

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Every Man a Sultan:
Indigenous Responses to the Somalia Crisis.....163
Jesse Walker

Balance or Justice? Reply to Ost 173
Hugh Murray

The Resilience of Left and Right:
Reply to Alain de Benoist.....178
Ivan Ascher

In Search of Right and Left 181
Marco Tarchi

Review

Racism, Antiracism
and the Decline of the French Left 189
Frank Adler

RECONSTRUCTING THE SUBJECT

Modernist Painting in Western Germany, 1945–1950

Yule F. Heibel

"Yule Heibel's text is a finely crafted, well presented, and extensively documented argument that demonstrates the close linkage of German art and the ideological positions emerging after 1945. . . . An example of excellent and innovative scholarship. . . ."
—Reinhold Heller

Through an exploration of the reception of modernist painting, Yule Heibel discusses how West German artists, intellectuals, and audiences attempted to fashion a secure "image of man" in the wake of Nazism and the Holocaust. Focusing on political, aesthetic, and theoretical issues, this book is an inquiry into the instability of subjectivity in Germany and its implications for the development of abstract painting. Drawing on the critical theory of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Heibel addresses such key figures as E. W. Nay, Willi Baumeister, Theodor Werner, Fritz Winter, Werner Heldt, and Carl Hofer.

33 illustrations.
Cloth: $45.00 ISBN 0-691-03646-2

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

AVAILABLE AT FINE BOOKSTORES OR DIRECTLY FROM THE PUBLISHER: 800-777-4726

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Populism and the New Politics

Paul Piccone and Gary Ulmen

Despite forebodings about the various "New World Orders" prefigured after the end of the Cold War, what is most striking today is how little has *actually* changed. NATO is still a functioning military alliance, the UN is as powerless as ever (except when operating as the *de facto* enforcer for US foreign policy) and, with the exception of the former German Democratic Republic, whose reintegration into the Federal Republic of Germany was the inevitable result of several decades of ideological warfare, the rest of the East is still largely cordoned off by a Velvet Curtain — now maintained by the other side to prevent hordes of people and products from flooding Western Europe. Within the US, all the wishful thinking about reordering national priorities away from military "waste" and in favor of massive internal welfare programs meant to eliminate lingering social pathologies have long since faded in the face of huge federal deficits. The so-called "peace bonus" has turned out to be a bitter joke on all those sufficiently credulous to buy into the proposition that US military spending had to do *only* with international military threats. That military Keynesianism has made it possible for various US administrations of either party to fine-tune an otherwise erratic national economy. Despite substantial reductions of obviously unnecessary hardware and installations, US military spending remains immense, testifying to the fact that it is not predicated exclusively on purely military or geopolitical imperatives.

What has changed, or is no longer viable, is the overall *legitimating* framework which for almost half a century allowed the US to steer the economy without having to negotiate the kind of broad consensus concerning national objectives required when real or imagined national emergencies such as "the international communist threat" no longer override all particularistic interests and priorities. In an axiologically heterogeneous society committed to no particular set of shared values beyond those long since embodied in the Constitution, the kind of broad consensus necessary to support extensive state intervention in social and cultural matters is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to muster. The protracted legislative battles concerning the federal budget transcend contingent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political idiosyncrasies and point directly to fundamental structural problems dating back to the end of the last century, when the *federal* government began to take on a *national* role and to mediatize social reality both in order to meet what it saw as the requirements of nascent corporate capitalism and the need to buffer the damage it was inflicting on existing communities (the policy of systematic "Americanization," i.e., homogenization of the populace, the introduction of compulsory universal education, the imposition of income tax, etc.). No longer rooted in a particular location and tied to people in flesh and blood, capital was behaving exactly the way Marx had claimed it would: not only did it become unaccountable to anything other than its bottom line, but its unavoidable particularism (read: greed) had destructive consequences for the system as a whole — to the point of eroding the conditions for its own reproducibility. Far from defending the traditional ethos, the standard statist remedies deployed at the time by "progressive" nationalist ideologues running the rapidly expanding federal government ("big government" as the regulator of "big business") have turned out to be an even bigger failure, at least to the extent that they replicated at the political level the fatal flaw originally responsible for the crisis of capitalism: the deterritorialization severing that vital organic bond without which both capital and government become self-destructive.

Most traditional Left critiques — especially Marxist ones — did identify the problem early on, but overshot the target: instead of vindicating private property as that unavoidable objectification ultimately constitutive of *homo faber* as a subject, they blamed private property *sic et nunc*, thus projecting collectivist solutions homogenizing all property as *state property* and thereby dissolving all subjectivity into an abstract universality destructive of all particularity. The solution thus turned out to be worse than the original problem, at least to the extent that it ultimately accelerated the process it was meant to reverse. This version of the dialectic of enlightenment, primarily responsible for most of the barbarities of the 20th century, can only be checked by restoring that subject-object identity obtaining not in omniscient agencies such as the Lukácsian "party," but in what Goethe, whose *Faust* first traced such a trajectory in fiction, identified as plain people living and working in organic communities, as autonomous individuals in charge of their own lives and accountable to their fellow men. This vision is none other than the populist project defeated at the turn of the century by an establishment which simultaneously integrated it as part and parcel of a progressivism legitimating "big government" regulation of "big business." This project failed first with the Great Depression and then with the New Deal, but was kept in place for over half a century thereafter by that very military Keynesianism now rendered illegitimate by the end of the Cold War and fiscally impractical by an increasingly unmanageable and unjustifiable national debt.

Very little has changed since the end of the Cold War because the main causes of the various American (also European) crises have yet to be dealt with.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They were always primarily endogenous, with the Cold War serving as a geopolitical *Ideenkleid* occluding fundamental issues and legitimating counterproductive temporary measures deployed to prevent more severe disruptions while retaining predominant relations of domination. Unfortunately, today those very same relations of domination can no longer be maintained by merely extending the one-dimensional logic of modernity. "Big business" itself is rapidly discovering that the formal rationality institutionalized by "bigness" clashes with a more pervasive substantial irrationality of the particular units no longer organically related to the whole, thus resulting in sharp declines in efficiency, competitiveness and, most importantly, profitability. The epiphenomenal erosion of that organicity hitherto taken for granted led first to shortsighted projects of artificial reconstitution and, when they inevitably failed, to serious attempts at decentralization and federalization to encourage the reconstitution of those internal control mechanisms it could not do without. This postmodern capitalist strategy, however, tends to render obsolete the expensive — and ultimately inefficient — regulatory means provided by "big government" and now supported only by the New Class personnel entrusted with managing it, whose economic base is thereby threatened. Now that the mega-state seems headed for Chapter 11, both fiscally and axiologically, it may be time to rethink those prematurely dismissed populist alternatives which, in a postmodern context no longer encumbered by discredited progressive philosophies of history relegating it to metaphysical "obsolescence," resurface as even more viable than when they were originally proposed.

This is why, on December 2-4, 1994, *Telos* held a major conference on "Populism and the New Politics" in order to elaborate further the themes originally prefigured in a smaller meeting held in Elizabethtown, Pa. a couple of years earlier.[1] Thanks to a generous grant from the Kaplan Fund, over 30 scholars were able to meet at Cooper Union in New York City to re-examine the populist heritage. The majority of the articles in this issue are revised versions of papers presented at that time (the rest will be published in the next issue). While heterogeneous in character, this material provides various accounts of a populism very different from the stereotypes still in vogue in most American universities — elitist settings always hostile and patronizing toward anything having to do with ordinary people and their outlook.

In view of the predominant misconceptions of populism, it is appropriate to begin with a general overview of the concept. This is precisely what Pierre-André Taguieff provides from a rigorous scholarly perspective. His exhaustive review of the literature testifies to the need for a systematic re-examination of the populist phenomenon. Yet the major strengths of his analysis are also its weaknesses. While he attempts to rescue "populism" from "political actors, journalists and media intellectuals," he fails to recognize its emancipatory potentials within

1. For a full report, see "Populism vs. the New Class: The Second Elizabethtown Telos Conference (April 5-7, 1991)," in *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), pp. 2-35.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the new, postmodern historical context. Thus he forsakes concrete examples for "ideal types" and, while criticizing unwarranted demonizations of the phenomenon, he goes on to stress the "polymorphic danger" of populism becoming stronger "the more intellectuals criticize it." The real danger, however, is to intellectualize a phenomenon before examining its concrete manifestations by generalizing on the basis of "ideal types" which apply everywhere and nowhere.

Of course, Taguieff is primarily concerned with developments in France, especially the Lepenist phenomenon, which he describes as "national populism." This "authoritarian" ideal type, representing what he calls the "identitarian" pole of populism, is contraposed to "protest populism," also an ideal type. What these two poles have in common is that they are both "against" something. While the second pole is closer to what is normally understood as populism in the US (anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, anti-representative democracy, etc.), Taguieff describes it in terms of an "appeal" to the people, thus precluding the possibility of seeing populism either as a *grass roots* movement or as a *positive* demand for direct democracy, regional government, local control, etc. For all the wealth of material he has studied, Taguieff still interprets populism through French glasses, whose Lepenist lenses distort his vision.

Taguieff rightly notes that one must understand populism in relation to democracy. What he calls "national populism," however, is not a form of populism but primarily a last-ditch effort to relegitimate authoritarian nationalism with democractic means. All appeals to the "power of the people" are appeals to democracy, but populism, like subsidiarity, does not go from the top down — through some demagogic leader — but from the bottom up. It is not an "appeal" but a "demand" on the part of the people, who may choose local or regional spokesmen to voice their concerns. The moment these spokesmen become demagogues and begin to manipulate the people for extraneous ends, the populist dimension is lost and the result is another distortion of "democracy." To be sure, local or regional movements — true populist movements — can be authoritarian, anti-intellectual, even racist, but they are not therefore anti-democratic. For them to be truly "populist," however, they have to be "anti-nationalist" since populism is first and foremost a "protest" against outside control of the local people's affairs. It is primarily a demand for self-government, at least with respect to those functions which can best be handled on a local or regional level. Here is where populism and subsidiarity overlap. No such overlaps, however, obtain between populism and nationalism. National Socialism was *not* a populist movement. It was a *nationalist* movement that used socialism, populism, and whatever else it could, first to gain power (by democratic means) and then to maintain it (through propaganda).

As the outlook of ordinary people unacquainted with and uninterested in sophisticated theoretical elaborations, populism has historically tended to stay close to the ground, focused on immediacy and predicated on relatively simple ideas. Compounded with a healthy suspicion of concepts not readily accessible to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the uninitiated and whose relevance is not always immediately obvious, this state of affairs has historically led to the conclusion that populism is not only theoretically unsophisticated but downright anti-intellectual. In a modernist context obsessed with centralization, bigness and expertise, the populist emphasis on local autonomy, human dimensions and practical reason could not avoid appearing quaint, provincial or even downright reactionary in seeking to recycle a hopelessly bygone past. But modernity took an unexpected detour through Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Gulag. Worse yet, centralization did not actually result in more efficiency and rationality, big was not necessarily always better, and the expert's immense knowledge about particular subfields is usually complemented by an appalling ignorance about everything else. Far from constituting the crowning achievement of Western rationality and universalism, the suspicion gradually grew that maybe the Marxists were right in seeing this modernity as the ideology of a rising bourgeoisie deploying capital as its power base and, more recently, of a New Class of intellectuals using knowledge for similar ends. The postmodern delegitimation of all universality as terminally nomological and, therefore, as camouflaged particularity, the demystification of progress as an eschatological Christian residue and of rationality as merely *another* way of relating to Being, have systematically undermined all modernist reservations concerning populist politics.

As the next article, "Postmodern Populism," suggests, on closer scrutiny populism appears to be much more in tune with the highest achievement of Western thought. In the US, it can easily be regarded as the political otherness of a pragmatism that could never be successfully reconciled with the pretensions of modernist dogma, while in Europe, short of dismissing the whole enterprise through a conformist "linguistic turn" to traditional liberalism, the aporias of traditional Critical Theory could only be overcome by vindicating the populist dimension. Even the hyper-rationalism of Husserlian phenomenology is ultimately based on the immediate certainty of the *doxa*, while the ontic status of the *eidos* also turns out to be ontological and, as in the case of "the origins of geometry" or of the teleology of Western *theoria*, is ultimately grounded in what can be described as a "populist decisionism." Most surprising of all, the political trajectory of a rigorous jurist such as Carl Schmitt also points to the figure of the partisan — the populist by another name — as the new political figure of the post-Cold War era. Far from being a theoretical vacuum, a rigorously reconstructed concept of populism in a postmodernist context may be able to synthesize some of the best traditions of 20th century thought into an exciting new political theory.

On a more concrete note, Tim Luke examines the extent to which a postmodern populism may provide the solution to problems which have proven unsolvable by the predominant modernist ideology. The unsustainable logic of indefinite growth, the problem of environmental degradation and the old question of "the good life" suddenly seem susceptible to the kind of solutions modernism could hardly envision. Along with Emery Roe, whose critical discussion of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

current debate about "sustainable development" runs along similar lines, and Paul Gottfried, whose article also focuses on particular policies, Luke shows how a postmodern populist perspective throws new light on old problems and may pave the way for original solutions and bold new departures.

Last, but not least, in order to correct another widespread misperception about populism, i.e., that it was purely an agrarian middle-class white phenomenon hostile to blacks, Jews, foreigners and other "undesirables," Larry A. Greene traces the history of black populism from its roots in the *post-bellum* South to the Northern urban centers, where in the process of adapting to rather different realities it developed into various new kinds of protest movements. Although it eventually succumbed to predominant racist prejudices, populism was the first movement in the South and elsewhere to prefigure new forms of political struggle uncontaminated by traditional racial barriers. More importantly, it left a permanent imprint on the consciousness of those black leaders in Northern urban centers who had to struggle throughout the 20th century for equality and justice. Such a populist heritage remains part and parcel of the social vision of the black churches which, notwithstanding the Great Society's sustained effort first to marginalize and then displace them by means of new, specially devised branches of the federal bureaucracy, are today still the heart and soul of what remains intact within the black community as well as the best hope to overcome the present state of widespread disintegration. Far from representing a movement foreign to the history of black struggles in the US, populism turns out to embody the best traditions of another particular sector of the population also historically committed to self-government, self-determination and direct democracy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem

Pierre-André Taguieff

The word "populism" has had an ironic misfortune: it has become popular. Having escaped the clutches of scholarly discourse, populism now thrives in the polemical space occupied by politicians, journalists and media intellectuals in polemical expressions such as "populistic drift," "populist endeavors," "populist peril," etc. In this context, the term has been adopted as a pejorative category with menacing connotations as is, without first subjecting it to critical scrutiny. If this concept is to be saved, it has to be classified and elaborated. The following will seek to determine how and under what conditions the term "populism" can be fruitfully used. Populism can only be conceptualized as a type of social and political *mobilization*, which means that the term can only designate a *dimension* of political action or discourse. It does not embody a particular type of political regime, nor does it define a particular ideological content. It is a political style applicable to various ideological frameworks.

Populism and National Populism: Between Ambiguity and Polemic

In the media and in politics, populism for the most part has a hard-to-grasp meaning whose only constant characteristic is its pejorative connotation. It is a delegitimating term. Any doctrine, movement or government considered questionable, despicable or even intolerable is branded "populist." Populism then is defined in relation to an idea of democracy, i.e., in relation to a type of regime or a political ideal. This relation makes sense only in terms of ideological corruption: populism is understood as a pathological form, pseudo- and post-democratic, produced by the corruption of democratic ideals. This post-democratic form is represented as anti-democratic and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ends up being confused with authoritarianism. This is why it is seen as a "danger to democracy." A populist leader is regarded as a cynical and talented demagogue who, through his charisma, his rhetoric and his promises, is able to take power through normal procedures, only to subsequently destroy or subvert them (by outlawing all opposition, instituting a one-party-state, eliminating alternatives, indoctrination).[1] The rejection of "populism" today is predicated on the claim that it is "dangerous for democracy." Anti-populists all agree that one must defend democracy unconditionally. More precisely, what must be defended is democracy coupled with respect for human rights: pluralist democracy — representative or liberal.

Populism and Authoritarianism

Today the populist danger is identified with the authoritarianism of the charismatic demagogue. Here one runs into a typological triad well known to older political theorists:[2] democracy/authoritarianism/totalitarianism. More recent efforts have tried to make sense of the idea of a "drift," or of a populist threat in terms of its alleged outcome, generally characterized by features typical of authoritarian regimes. Within "normal" political science,[3] the latter are characterized by a combination of three features: 1) Authoritarian regimes do not envision the creation of a "new man," they do not seek a "total mobilization" to change society from the ground up according to some grand ideological project carried out by a single party. Rather, they are characterized by a conservatism, explicit or concealed, combining, e.g., authoritarian modernization (through enforced industrialization or imposed

---

1. Certain characteristics of Hitler's seizure of power (the March 5, 1933 elections) have been developed into a negative model of the use of democratic legality to abolish democracy. See Martin Broszat, *L'Etat Hitlérien. L'Origine et l'Évolution des Structures du IIIe Reich* (1970), tr. by P. Moreau (Paris, Fayard 1985), ch.3, p. 105ff. This historical fact has become a warning against democratic "excesses" or a critique of the majority principle and of the "people's sovereignty" as the basis of modern political legitimacy. Max Weber identified the demagogue with the "charismatic politician," which he saw as "a product of the Western city-state." See *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 5th edition (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1982), p. 483. For a critical discussion, see Moses I. Finley, *Sur l'Histoire Ancienne. La Matière, la Forme et la Methode*, tr. by J. Carlier (Paris, La Decouverte,1987), pp. 161-169.

2. See Hannah Arendt's pioneering work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1951), Part 3 "Totalitarianism." For a discussion of the concept of authoritarianism, see Guy Hermet, " L'Autoritanisme," in Madeline Grawitz and Jean Leca, eds., *Traité de Science Politique*, vol. 2, *Les Régimes Politique Contemporain* (Paris: PUF, 1985), pp. 269-312.

3. Cf. Guy Hermet, *Les Désenchantements de la Liberté. La Sortie des Dictatures dans les Années 90* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), pp. 22-31.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

economic liberalism) and reactionary despotism.[4] Their objective is to rule society in order to monopolize its wealth. 2) Authoritarian regimes follow more or less a radical logic of exclusion: "the selective exclusion of all those who threaten . . . the social stability or personal privileges of their leaders."[5] Unlike totalitarian regimes, "selective exclusion" does not seek to destroy social relations and leaves open the possibility of pluralism. These are the "limited pluralist regimes"[6] where total militarization of society is absent.[7] 3) "The repression they unleash remains discriminating if not altogether moderate,"[8] which distinguishes them from totalitarian systems practicing unlimited terror. What is abolished is participation and liberty, the exercise of civil rights. As Arendt pointed out, authoritarian regimes sought to "limit liberty, but never to abolish it."[9]

These are the characteristics usually attributed to authoritarian regimes, which lead to the fear of the "populist threat" entailing authoritarianism. It is primarily because of its *authoritarian* content that populism is denounced and rejected. Here, however, a qualification should be added: all leaders of movements or of authoritarian regimes are not populist — presenting themselves as coming from the people, speaking to them, addressing their aspirations and deriving their legitimacy from this direct and privileged relation with this mythic people (energetic, virtuous, authentic, etc.). An authoritarian leader can also be a monarch, a high ranking military leader, a technocrat, etc., in no need of any legitimacy based on popularity or "plebeianism."[10]

Only since the end of the 1980s have encyclopedias and dictionaries shown traces of the new uses of the term. For example, one defines populism in terms of "all movements and doctrines that make an exclusive appeal to, or give preference to, the people as an indiscriminate mass." This entry

---

4. Classical examples of this are Franco in Spain after 1955 and Pinochet in Chile at the end of the dictatorship. For more recent examples, see James Cohen, ed. *Amérique Latine. Démocratie et Exclusion* (Paris: L'Harmattan/ *Futur Anterieur*, 1994); Luis Carlos Bresser Pereira, "Une Nouvelle Interprétation de l'Amérique Latine: la Crise de l'État," in *Cahiers des Amérique Latine*, No. 17 (1994), pp.25-49.

5. Hermet, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

6. Juan Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in E. Allardt, Y. Littunen, eds. *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems* (Helsinki: The Academic Bookstore, 1964), p. 295.

7. Cf. Philippe Burrin, "Le Fascism," in Jean François Sirinelli, ed., *Histoire des Droites en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 623.

8. Hermet, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

9. Hannah Arendt, *Le Système Totalitaire*, tr. by J. L. Bourget, R. Davreu et P. Levy (Paris: Le Seuil, 1972), p. 134.

10. See, e.g., the Portuguese ex-president Marcelo Caetano. On the populist legacy in the authoritarianism of several Latin-American regimes after 1960, see Daniel Pecaut, *L'Ordre et la Violence* (Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 1987), pp. 253-254.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

retains one essential characteristic of populism: the emphasis on the whole, on the unity of the people as the ultimate value.[11] This substantial unity sought by populism betrays an implicit communitarianism — a communitarian orientation, which provides the basis for a stigmatization of hedonist individualism seen as egotistical or competitive (this is the source of the leftist social or even socialist flavor, and therefore its relative ideological indeterminacy along the Left-Right axis).[12] It is this turning of collective unity into an absolute which, in times of peace, engenders an uninterrupted and excessive suspicion of traitors and detractors: the internal enemy is demonized, the more intensely the more it is invisible. This is the source of the conspiratorial vision applied to invisible enemies accused of destroying the unity of the people. This imagined conspiracy leads to an aggressive *defense or pseudo-defense*, with the objective of restoring the unity of the people.[13] Here is where populism flows into a nationalism concerned with the defense of a collective identity allegedly threatened by both internal and external enemies. A populism of this kind appears indistinguishable from "populist nationalism" or "national populism." The latter, however, should be understood in two senses: 1) an orientation of *unity* and *integration*; and 2) one of *identity* and *exclusivity*. The latter is historically illustrated by the "populist-nationalist-racial "*völkisch*" movement based on an hyper-valorization of real origins,[14] of the deepest roots of an intense and profound identity of the German people. This unitary orientation reappeared more recently in Gaullism. In this sense, national-populism brings to mind ideologies of national unity. Hence the disjunction: unity or homogeneity.[15] In its 1983 edition, *Le Petit Robert* redefines populism as it did originally in 1967: "(1929; from the Latin '*populus*,' 'people'). A literary school which searches, within literature, to depict realistically the life of the people." Reference is also made to the school created in 1927 by Leon Lemonnier, but

11. *Trésor de la Langue Française* (Paris: CNRS/Gallimard, 1988), p. 780. *Le Grand Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Larousse* (Paris, 1984), p. 840, characterizes populism politically as: "The political ideology of certain movements of national liberation seeking to free the people without having to resort to class struggle."

12. François Bourricaud, *Le Retour de la Droite* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1986), p. 214.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-17.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 203. See especially Louis Dupeux, "'Révolution Conservatrice' et Modernité," pp. 40-41; Louis Dupeux, "La Version '*völkisch*' de la Première 'Alternative," pp. 185-192; Jean Favrat, "Theodor Fritsch ou la Conception '*völkisch*' de la Propagande," pp.339-349, all in Louis Dupeux, ed., *La Révolution Conservatrice dans l'Allemagne de Weimar* (Paris: Kimé, 1992).

15. Philippe Burrin, *La Dérive Fasciste. Doriot, Déat, Bergery 1933-1945* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1986), pp.21-25; and Philippe Burrin, "Le Fascisme," in Sirinelli, *op. cit.*, p. 622.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

excluding Russian "populism" (a political-philosophical movement in the second half of the 19th century) or American populism (a late 19th century political movement concerned with the defense of small farmers).[16]

In fact, the new use of the term "populism" is derived from "national-populism," a concept created by 1950s sociologists to designate social and political movements directed by such charismatic leaders as Peron in Argentina or Vargas in Brazil. Very quickly, however, Nasser also became identified as a populist leader.[17] These mobilizations exhibited very disparate characteristics: authoritarianism (even Caesarism), nationalism, the ideology of national unity, appeals to the whole (democratism) and to "revolution" (such as a regrounding rupture of unionist inspiration), the presence of a charismatic leader masquerading as a demagogue, etc. These ideological configurations were determined by a particular combination of national anxiety (nationalism) and a social preoccupation (socialism) symbolized by the "popular" dimension: the joining of the will of the people and a "revolutionary" break with the old political order. This is the origin of the current appeal to the idea of justice: within Peronism it means to impose against all traditional parties and beliefs a "new deal" in the interest of certain groups and classes excluded from sharing benefits and participating in political life.[18]

In the 1960s, sociological analyses of Latin American populism saw them as mobilizations linked to a convulsive transition to mass democracy meant to bring about changes on behalf of the masses to satisfy their common interest in inter-class solidarity, implying a common external enemy of the "people" or the "nation" (this is how nationalism resurfaces in these popular movements). In 1965,[19] Torcuato di Tella presented Latin American populism as a movement embodying these various characteristics: "A political movement supported by the masses of the urban working class and/or by the peasants, but lacking the organized power or autonomy of

---

16. See also Alain Ray, ed., *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française* (Paris: Dictionnaire *Le Robert*, 1992), p. 1580: "populism" originally designated a "literary school," now "it designates more broadly (in art and politics) the importance of popular strata of society."

17. On populism in the Third World, see Peter Worsley's "The Concept of Populism," in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, eds., *Populism, Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), pp. 239-240. On Nasserism and the variety of populisms characterized by a reformist outlook, the leader's charisma, the symbolic exploitation of mythical identity (Arab identity) and a military regime, see Hermet, *op. cit.*, p. 292; Torcuato S. di Tella, "Populism and Reform in Latin America," in C. Veliz, ed., *Obstacles to Change in Latin America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

18. Bourricaud, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

19. di Tella, *op. cit.*, p. 47. See also Alistair Hennessy, "Latin America," in Jonescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, p. 29. Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York and London, 1981), p. 139ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

either of these sectors. It is also supported by those sectors which, not belonging to the working class, share an anti-*status quo* ideology."

When the notion of "national-populism" was introduced to characterize some of these Latin American movements, Gino Germani stressed, on the one hand, the paradoxical features and ideological "hybrids" he attempted to categorize and, on the other, the specificity of these popular movements struggling against "imperialism": "In countries where the 'mobilization' of popular social strata took place *after* the crisis of Western democracy, after the blossoming and development of industrialized societies with authoritarian communist regimes and, above all, *at the heart* of a situation of economic or political dependence precisely the opposite of those countries with representative democracy, the orientation of elites who vied for the leadership of the popular movements had to be very different (from those of Europe). This orientation is typically expressed in what are called 'industrial ideologies,' where the essential characteristics seem to be authoritarianism, nationalism and one form or other of socialism, collectivism or state capitalism, i.e., those movements which have combined various features of opposing ideologies. Left authoritarianism, Left nationalism, Right socialism and a whole series of hybrid formulas which appear paradoxical from the viewpoint of the Left-Right dichotomy (or the continuum). These are precisely the formulas which, in spite of their diversity and their opposition, can be subsumed under a generic designation of 'national-popular' movements."[20]

Peron never hid his admiration for Mussolini, who had "modified" the idea of "the proletarian *class* to that of the proletariat *people*."[21] This is the Left heritage of fascism. Thus French pre-fascism can be regarded as nothing more than a protesting *populist Right* whose doctrinal content is "national socialism."[22] As Philip Burrin correctly points out, the revolutionary Right is also a populist Right — "a mechanism for merging extremes and

20. Gino Germani, "Démocratie Représentative et Classes Populaires," in *Sociologie du Travail*, No. 4 (1961), pp. 107-108. For a development of this hypothesis, see Gino Germani, "Fascisme et Classe Sociale," in Ricardo Lucchini, ed., *Analyses du Fascisme* (Albeuve: Editions Castella, 1979), pp. 29-57; and Gino Germani, *Authoritarism, Fascism and National Populism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978).

21. Georges Goriely, "Un Concept Journalistique Nouveau: le Populism," in *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, Vol. 3, No. 1-2 (1992), p. 11. On populism as a component of fascism, and the fascist dimension of authoritarian or militarized populism, see Peter Wiles, "A Syndrome, not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism," in Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, p. 176ff.; and Conavan, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-149.

22. Zeev Sternhell, *La Droite Révolutionaire. Les Origines Françaises du Fascisme* 1885-1914 (Paris: Le Seuil, 1978).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

finally creating fascist ideology."[23] In this context, Georges Goriely observes: "A military dictatorship supported by labor unions, with an enormous clientele of 'shirtless people' (*descamisados*), struggling against Anglo-Saxon capitalist domination, strongly resembles that Left national-socialism whose representatives had been destroyed by Hitler but of which he was still able to preserve a part of the image. Nazism never presented itself merely as a form of order, of particularly muscular anti-subversiveness. Many Germans who, in this case, did not want to become 'losers,'[24] were fascinated by him —along with Arabs and South Americans, but also Ukrainians, Slovaks, Croats, Irish, Boers, Bretons and the Flemish. With fascism out of the picture, communism became the substitute. It is there that certain groups of 'losers' (many newcomers to this status became the equivalent of the Third World) hoped to find support and inspiration in order to provide military, police and industrial power to their new state, and in the struggle against imperialism."[25]

As has been emphasized, the appeal to the people degenerates into dictatorship over and against the people. The distinction between fascism, authoritarianism and Bonapartism is unclear. These ideologies of *the third way* between capitalism and socialism present a number of common boundaries and overlaps. Already in 1935, David J. Saposs hypothesized that fascism ought to be understood as an "extreme expression of a *middle class outlook* or populism," simultaneously anti-capitalist and anti-communist: "The fundamental ideology of the middle and petit bourgeoisie is populism. . . . Its ideal is a class of small independent owners, made up of businessmen, artisans and farmers. This social element . . . known as the 'middle class' has appropriated a system of private enterprise, profit and competition founded on grounds totally different from those of capitalism . . . . Since its first appearance, this class has been opposed to 'big business' and what today is called 'capitalism'."[26]

Within this perspective, some historians have emphasized the "popular and plebeian dimension" of fascism, including an anti-conservative orientation and a particular kind of anti-capitalism — "the anti-capitalism of the people" — exemplified by the success fascism encountered "within the

23. Burrin, *op. cit.*, p. 628.

24. See Francis Arzalier, *Les Perdants. La Dérive Fasciste des Mouvements Autonomistes et Indépendantistes au XXe Siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 1990).

25. Goriely, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

26. David J. Saposs, "The Role of the Middle Class in Social Development: Fascism, Populism, Communism, Socialism," in Economic Essays in Honor of Wesley Clair Mitchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 393ff. See also Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Renzo De Felice, *Comprendre le Fascisme*, tr. by M. Baudouy (Paris: Seghers, 1975), p. 140.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lower middle class of towns threatened by capitalism."[27] Renzo De Felice has analyzed the anti-bourgeois dimension of early fascism and pointed out that its rhetoric was "ultimately one of the characteristics of the mentality of many fascists, and among certain intellectuals it had populist overtones."[28] Actually, the cultural struggle against the "bourgeois outlook" (*bourgeoisisme*) was carried out on two distinct levels: within the moral sphere (privileged by Mussolini, who contraposed "heroism" to bourgeois "egoism") and on the socio-political level, where the celebration of the "healthy" and "generous" people "predisposed to total commitment" allowed the stigmatization of the cowardly, selfish bourgeois, concerned above all with "comfort."[29] In a speech delivered October 25, 1938, Mussolini claimed that he had "unmasked an enemy — an enemy of our own government," and that "this enemy went by the name of 'bourgeoisie'," which is "primarily a moral category: it is a state of mind, a temperament, a mentality clearly contrary to the fascist mentality."[30] In another speech, delivered March 18, 1934, Mussolini denounced the bourgeois spirit as a possible threat to the government: "This spirit of satisfaction and of adaptation, this tendency toward scepticism, compromise, the comfortable life, careerism." The bourgeois mentality is characterized by its weaknesses or shortcomings: unfit for action, lacking courage, incapable of self-sacrifice, blind to all grandeur, etc. Mussolini's rhetoric privileged the spiritualist tone of the anti-bourgeoisie: "The fascist creed is heroism, the bourgeois' egotism." To "heroism" he added revolutionary zeal: "Against this danger, there is only one remedy: the principle of permanent revolution."[31] This is the uncompromising revolutionary spirit he reaffirmed March 26, 1939, before *squadristi* who had come to Rome to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fascist struggle: "A *squadrista* says of he who hides behind the curtains that the revolution is not over but that from the viewpoint of habits, characters and social divisions it has barely begun."[32] Within orthodox Italian fascism, anti-bourgeois sentiments flow along two separate routes: as populism, if the emphasis is on anti-capitalist sentiment; as "revolutionary" heroism, if the term "bourgeoisie" is reduced to "bourgeois spirit."

---

27. Barrington Moore Jr., *Les Origines Sociales dr la Dictature et de la Démocratie*, tr. by P. Clinquart (Paris: La Découverte/Maspero, 1963), pp. 357ff.; and De Felice, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
28. Renzo De Felice, *Le Fascisme: un Totalitarisme à l'Italienne?* tr. by C. Brice, S. Gherardi-Pouthier and F. Mosca (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1988), p. 113.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-118.
30. Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia* (Florence-Rome: 1951-1963), Vol. XXIX, p. 189, as quoted by De Felice, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.
31. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 192ff., as quoted by De Felice, *op. cit.*, pp. 116.
32. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIX, p. 250, as quoted by De Felice, *op. cit.*, pp. 117.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Between Hyper-Democracy and Anti-Democracy

In a nutshell, populism has become an all-purpose term, an all-encompassing category, which today is carelessly applied to very different phenomena. The same goes for an expression such as "national-populism," which has become an ideological catch-all phrase and a polemical label. Populism and national-populism have lost their conceptual content through too much polemical usage. Yet the inflated deployment of these two descriptive and typographical categories, and above all their polemical usage within the developing new vulgate (a mixture of anti-populism and anti-nationalism) are recent phenomena. One can see signs of a transformation of standardized anti-fascism, or the sign of an attempt to update the anti-fascist imagery through a change in vocabulary. By describing them as populist, a multitude of cloudy phenomena seem to become transparent and the future clearer, even self-explanatory. Populism functions as a new key to history. It is a mixed metaphor which, in its recent media uses, throws a false light on still unclear emerging socio-political ideas and opens a false window on the real chaotic evolution of the post-communist world. The diagnosis of these "populist drifts" allows the stigmatization of emerging socio-political venues that do not conform to the liberal model of "democratic transition." A new sense of "doom and gloom" hounds the anti-populist vision of the world, where the seduction — of oversimplification — comes from the reconciliation of a large variety of phenomena, thus generating the illusion of a panoptic understanding. Suffice here to cite some names of leaders and movements the media has baptized "populists": in France, the "Left populist" is Bernard Tapie, while the "populist of the extreme Right" is Jean-Marie Le Pen (without forgetting the semi-populists Philippe de Villiers and Charles Pasqua); in Italy, the "tele-populist" is Silvio Berlusconi and his movement *Forza Italia*, including the gifted demagogue Umberto Bossi and his Northern League; in Austria, the telegenic Jörg Haider; and in the US, the self-declared leader of "grassroots America," Ross Perot, representing an alleged category of "multi-millionaire populists"; in Algeria and beyond the rise of "fundamental Islam" is seen as constituting a form of political-religious populism; and in Russia there is the drunkard, Boris Yeltsin, pretending to be a "populist" ever since he began opposing Gorbachev, before being replaced by the "clown" Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who has also been denounced as an "ultra-nationalist," as a "new Hitler"; in Peru, there is the pragmatic Alberto Fujimori, elected president in 1990; etc.

Lately, "Serbian populism" has been added to the list, within a polemical context where "populism" becomes the equivalent of "nationalism,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"ethnicity," even "racism" or "fascism."[33] In the 1990s, to this series of absolute evils one can add "fundamentalism" — an abstract category of which radical Islam (or Islamic Fundamentalism) is generally regarded as its most repulsive expression. The list of synonyms for the Devil goes on uninterrupted, while simultaneously impoverishing political thought. Thus, in 1994, within the ritualistic language of media intellectuals "fundamentalism" and "populism" became interchangeable.

Anti-populism presents itself as a confused mixture of "anti-nationalism," "anti-racism," "anti-fascism," "anti-Right," and "anti-demagogy." Within such a polemical context, populism is neither an analytical tool nor an adequate descriptive model. To suggest that "populism has become an integral part of political life"[34] does not mean it has gained valid scientific certification. It is for this reason, however, that the simultaneously confusing and ordinary idea of populism has been raised to the level of a concept by many political analysts and sociologists. The false light emanating from populism is a psycho-social fact in need of critical examination. The least satisfactory hypothesis is that anti-populism has become the last ideological version of the anti-totalitarianism of those media intellectuals who came on the scene in the 1970s, with the rise of "the new philosophers" who professionalized insults and substituted theatrical moral indignation for thought.

When the category of "national-populism" was reintroduced in the French language in 1984[35] it was hardly accepted, despite efforts to provide a clear, working definition. Within a context marked by the unforeseen eruption of the National Front within the French political arena, it was a matter of developing an analytical model for this social, political and ideological phenomenon. Between 1983 and the end of the 1980s, most political commentators were satisfied with identifying the National Front with what was already well-known (the extreme Right), and diagnosing it as the "resurgence" of a dreadful past (i.e., the return of the old devils, etc.) — a past located at the end of the 19th century (Drumont, Barrès, Maurrais), or

---

33. For an effort at conceptualization, see Nebojsa Popov, "Le Populisme Serbe. D'un Phémonène Marginal à un Phémonène Dominant." in *Les Temps Modernes*, Vol. 49, No. 573 (April 1994), pp. 22-62; No. 574 (May 1994), pp. 22-84.

34. Michel Wieviorka, "Les Dangers da l'Après-Populisme," in *Libération* (October 5, 1994), p. 10.

35. See Pierre-André Taguieff, "La Rhétorique du National-Populisme," in *Cahiers Bernard Lazare*, No. 109 (June-July 1984), and *Mots*, No. 9 (October 1984), pp. 113-139; Pierre-André Taguieff, "La Doctrine du National-Populisme en France," in *Etudes* (January 1986), pp. 27-46; and Pierre-André Taguieff, "Mobilisation National-Populiste en France," in *Lignes*, No. 9 (March 1990), pp. 91-136.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between the two world wars, or during the Petain regime, or even during the "Poujadist fever." Some journalists even thought they were able to recognize the basic characteristics of "totalitarianism," "fascism" or "Nazism" in the Lepenist movement. In short, all the phenomena of the National Front were presented as an ideological aggregation of fragments or of a demonized past. These categorizations were nothing more than identifications with some allegedly well-known "isms." Knowing was reduced to recognizing, thus spawning a number of undesirable consequences.

First of all, each observer tends to project his own fears and hatreds on the Lepenist phenomena. The literature on the National Front and Le Pen is saturated with mutually exclusive subjective associations (Le Pen-Boulanger, Le Pen-Hitler, Le Pen-Petain, Le Pen-Poujade etc.). Secondly, the search for "recurrences" detracts from the analysis of sources: false evidence of continuities, relations and even repetitions discourage the exploration of the specificity of the phenomena. Finally, the reassuring illusion of an identification of recurrence doubles as a virtuous moralistic condemnation of the phenomenon: as the recurrence of evil (the extreme Right, fascism, totalitarianism, etc.), the Lepenist movement need not be analyzed and clarified but, rather, denounced and isolated. The passion for recognition chases away the desire for knowledge. This explains the lack of rigorous studies of the Lepenist phenomenon: researchers act as if they were intimidated by the imperative to confront it as an emergency. The search for immediate effectiveness renders superfluous the need to come too close to the repulsive object. Conceptualization is one way of losing time. Slogans are sufficient. The urgency of the anti-Le Pen struggle justified economizing by doing away with a costly detour through knowledge.[36]

Six years later, at the beginning of the 1990s, the term (not the concept) "populism" had become a fetish of media intellectuals. Thus, e.g., in the January 1992 preface to the new edition of his book, Alain Minc, after congratulating himself for having been right all along and after asking ten questions regarding the future of a world marked by various types of revolutions, poses an 11th "question": "The ideology derived from these revolutions, populism, is not a recycling of past totalitarianisms. Proof of this is the possible convergence with ecology in a strange 'eco-nationalist populism.' What values and what principles does it advocate?"[37] In reading the book,

36. For militant interventions, see Edwy Plenel and Alain Rollat, *L'Effect Le Pen* ((Paris: Le Monde/ La Découverte, 1984); Joseph Lorien, Karl Criton and Serge Dumont, *Le Système Le Pen* (Anvers: Editions EPO, 1985) — to cite only the least superficial.

37. Alain Minc, *La Vengeance des Nations* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1993), p. 9.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one can hardly understand anything about populism. It turns out to be a term applied to a whole host of contemporary phenomena in order to stigmatize them or to indicate their disquieting nature. It is a matter of a polemical term, or of a strictly polemical usage meant to delegitimate a polymorphous object. The same lack of precision can be found in university textbooks. Thus Michel Wieviorka writes: ". . . populism, which can also be considered national-populism . . . ." [38] The tendency is to assimilate more often than to differentiate new ideological-political phenomena. The term "populism" is used to denote all that is not quite yet conceptualized.

In the introduction of his admirable little study on Islam and democracy, Bernard Lewis draws attention on an important semantic phenomenon, the *inherent ambiguity* of certain words, especially current political terms such as "liberalism," "democracy," or "popular."[39] The study of the semantic variations of these terms with apparently opposing meanings has a scholarly name: "enantiosemantics" (from "enatios," opposed): "In the meticulous study of their superb language, the ancient Arab philologists have qualified certain words as *addad*, which literally mean opposites. In effect, these words have contrary meanings. Some verbs signify at one at the same time to reinforce and to weaken, to be depressed or to be uplifted, to know and to ignore, to hope and to fear, to buy and to sell. This phenomenon is not limited only to Arabic. It has been the object not only of linguistic but psychological studies. Today this predicament characterizes our political vocabulary, not only in the Middle East but, perhaps most of all, in Europe and America. This it is how the word liberalism, originally associated with the idea of political, civil and economic liberty, today, primarily in America, refers to political action seeking social transformation. The word does preserve its original meaning, but it is exaggerated and turned into a depiction of a certain cult of social permissiveness. Enantiosemantic change is clearer and even more spectacular in the current use of the word democracy and all its derivations. This is how it was in the era of the two Germanys, with the communist dictatorship known as the German Democratic Republic. The same was true of the two Yemens. As for those interested in the Middle East, they will remember the uneasiness caused when the Sudanese Republic decided to rebaptize itself as 'the Democratic Republic of the Sudan.' Most observers, there and elsewhere, thought this change in name meant a threat

38. Michel Wieviorka, *La Démocratie à l'Épreuve. Nationalisme, Populisme, Ethnicité* (Paris: La Decouverte, 1995), pp. 86-87.

39. Bernard Lewis, "Islam et Démocratie," in *Notes de la Fondation Saint-Simon* No. 54 (June 1993), p. 31.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to individual liberty and human rights. In such contexts, the words 'democracy' and 'democratic' have acquired a very precise connotation: tyranny within the country and terrorism outside it. This connotation is reinforced when the same democracy is considered 'popular,' another enantiosemantic word which means at the same time both for and against the people."[40]

Lewis' remarks apply even more to the term "populism" in its ordinary usage, which presupposes an *appeal to the people*. Solely in terms of its lexicographic (or descriptive) definition, the word "populism" means at the same time a movement toward the people, in favor of the people, an echo of the people, and a strategy of seduction of the people meant to subjugate them with flattery in order to dominate them or to acquire political power. In everyday language, populism is an equivocal term, whose semantic content must coexist uneasily with the ideas of *demophilia* and *demagoguery*. As such, populism can be seen as an ideological corruption of democracy, understood as implying, in Proudhon's words, *demopedia*, i.e., the commitment to instruct and to educate the people, rather than to seduce them into acting against their own wishes. In terms of contemporary everyday usage of the term, a political attitude can be considered "populist" if it implies a challenge to, or even a rejection of, representative democracy. In this sense, populism consists essentially in questioning political systems based on parliamentary representation. This polemical dimension is clear: an appeal to the people *against*. . . . Thus, populism questions the very existence of a mediation embodied by representative institutions. Here the ordinary meaning of the term corresponds to the scholarly meaning: when populism is articulated along these lines, it consists of contraposing direct to representative democracy.

The Ambiguities of Populism

The ambiguity of South American populism, both as a manipulation of the masses and an expression of the rise of the popular classes, is typical of 20th century populism. It oscillated between demagoguery and protest. It is this two-sided character of populism that the liberal view of populism neglects or conceals altogether. An expression of the elites' fear and repulsion of the middle classes, this liberal view is actually a representational screen which creates the illusion of explaining the phenomenon by reducing it to an instance of a particularly crude *symbolic mass manipulation*. More precisely, the liberal view is radically anti-populist. It is based on the traditional elites' fear of the

40. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new alliance between the irrational power of the masses and the grossly personalized style of certain tendentially demagogic leaders. In the mid-1960s, Francisco C. Weffort identified this elitist reaction against South American populist authoritarianism in Brazil as aimed not so much against the institutional authoritarianism of the dictator (Getulio Vargas, 1937-1945) as against the paternalistic or charismatic authoritarianism of the democratic leaders after the war (1945-1964).[41] Weffort emphasized the difficulty in understanding the many contradictory aspects of what is called populism in Brazil: "Populism is the result of a long period of transformations in Brazilian society from 1930 on. As a governing style always aware of popular pressures, or as mass politics seeking to manipulate popular aspirations, populism can only be understood in terms of the political crisis and economic development begun with the 1930 revolution. It is an expression of the crisis of both the oligarchy and liberalism (always allied in Brazilian history) and of the democratization of the state. . . . It is primarily an expression of . . . the appearance of the popular classes within the urban and industrial development of the time, and the necessity, felt by some of the new ruling groups, to include the masses in the political game. . . . Populism is a political phenomenon with often contradictory aspects. . . . From 1945 to 1964, many well-known national leaders (three presidents and several state governors) sought popular support within the country's most urbanized centers. They all had their own style, their own political stance, always a bit nebulous, and their own ideology, even less explicit and often confused. The differences, at times the contradictions, between them are such that it is difficult to determine a basic common feature without discussing the interest they all had in capturing the people's votes and in manipulating their aspirations."[42]

Weffort privileges a model of populism based on the following characteristics: an on-going crisis, a politically unstable form of transition, an attempt to modernize, the integration of new social groups within the political sphere, electoral demagoguery of leaders anxious to control the growing masses.[43] The liberal elitist view of populism, in contrast, focuses on the manipulative dimension, so that populism turns out be is nothing more than a synonym for "demagoguery" or mass "democracy," combined with the rhetoric of a "savior": "There is also a temptation . . . to conceive . . . of populism as a personal rather than a social and political phenomenon. Thus the abrupt

41. See Francisco C. Wefford, "Le Populisme dans la Politique Brésilienne," in *Les Temps Modernes* (October 1967), pp. 624-649; Hennessy, *op. cit.*, p. 29; Germani, *op. cit.*, Canovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 143ff and 168-169; Hermet, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-292.

42. Weffort, *op. cit.*, pp. 624-625.

43. For a critical exposition of different approaches, see Pécaut, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-254.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political shifts of leaders such as Vargas and Jânio Quadros may give the impression that populism is nothing but the opportunism of certain leaders whose hunger for power is associated with an almost unlimited capacity to manipulate the masses. This view, which seems to express the viewpoint of certain middle class liberals perplexed by the direction taken by the political process after 1945 — may have a grain of truth. Many people on the Left . . . thought that way. Yet, a regime's political style should not be characterized purely as manipulation . . . to be confused with the history of Brazil over the last thirty years. Populism . . . has meant the manipulation of the masses, but this manipulation has never been absolute. Otherwise, one would have to accept the elites' liberal view according to which populism is a kind of historical aberration, fed by mass emotion and its leaders' lack of principles."[44]

The liberal and elitist view of populism oversimplifies the phenomenon, whose complexity is bound to the specific historical and national conditions of its appearance in the second third of the 20th century. Weffort emphasizes certain ambiguous aspects of Brazilian populism: "Populism has been a specific and concrete method of mass manipulation, but it has also been a means for expressing their concerns. It could also be seen as a form of organization of power for the ruling groups and the main form of political expression of the rising masses in the process of industrial and urban development, as well as a mechanism whereby the ruling groups rule, and a way of potentially threatening this rule. If this governing style and political behavior is essentially ambiguous, it must be at least partially due to the personal ambiguity of politicians divided between love of the people and love of governmental functions."[45]

The validity of Weffort's analysis[46] is demonstrated by the fact that Brazilian populism (Vargas and, subsequently, the leaders of the democratic era) was a way to resolve difficult legitimation problems embodied within a specific "state of compromise": realizing that they were "unable to legitimate their domination by themselves, the ruling groups "needed intermediaries . . .

---

44. Weffort, *op. cit.*, pp. 625-626.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 626.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 638-639. For more elaborate analyses, see Francisco C. Weffort, *O Populismo na Política Brasileira* (Rio: Paz e Terra, 1978). Various experts have argued that Varga's regime (before and after WWII) exemplified mass fascism. See Alistair Hennessy, "Fascism and Populism in Latin America," in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (London: Wildwood House, 1976); Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), pp. 161-177; Juan Linz, "Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective," in Laqueur, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-121.; Hélgio Trindada, *La Tentation Fasciste au Brézil dans les Années Trente* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1988), pp. 1-11 and 169-175.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able to establish alliances with the urban sectors of the classes they ruled." Thus the populist leader turns out to be a mediator whose ability to manipulate leads to a compromise assuring the State a minimal legitimacy.[47] Populism in Brazil had a dual ambiguity. On the one hand, it permitted the coexistence of *protest* and *manipulation*: protest as a populist movement, manipulation as populist propaganda; on the other, it articulated *solidarity* within *authoritarianism*: national solidarity (the nation as one) as ideological populism with an authoritarian tendency or, more precisely, with a tendency toward a dictatorship of a single party as a populist regime.

Authoritarian National-Populism in France: an Ideal Type

With the 1969 publication of Ghita Ionescu's and Ernest Gellner's anthology,[48] populism finally began to be taken seriously within political science, sociology and anthropology."A ghost that haunts the world,"[49] populism was the object of very different analyses which showed the importance of the phenomenon and revealed the concept's relative obscurity.[50] Beginning with a psychological-political approach, these analyses allowed the identification of a hard core common to all definitions of populism:[51] the

---

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 648-649.

48. Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.* On the whole, this anthology exemplifies what Wefort calls the "liberal" view of populism — a hyper-critical view which turns into an anti-populist outlook. A legitimate critique turns into an unqualified polemic. This negative view of populism has been popularized primarily by Daniel Bell and Richard Hofstadter. See Richard Hofstadter, "North America," in Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-27; Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (New York: The Free Press, 1962), pp. 114ff; and Daniel Bell, "Newt Gingrich ou les Contradictions du Populisme," in *Le Monde* (March 2, 1995), p. 14. See also Pécat's comments on this model of "the state of compromise" inclined to appeal to a popular legitimacy because of the Latin American bourgeoisies' inability to exercise hegemony. *Op. cit.*, pp. 247-248; see also Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Au-delá des Transitions à la Démocratie en Amérique Latine," in *Amérique Latine: Démocratie et Exclusion*, *op. cit.*, p. 59, who rejects the thesis according to which populism is an unstable political formation which, following a legitimation crisis, constitutes a first attempt at a resolution. See also Joseph Krulic, "Les Populismes d'Europe de l'Est," in *Débat*, No. 67 (November-December 1991), pp. 89-91. On populist and neo-populist movements in Latin America, see Alain Touraine, *La Parole et le Sang. Politique et Société en Amériqu*e Latine (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1988); J. Castro Rea, G. Ducatenzeiler and P. Faucher, "La Tentation Populista: Argentina, Brasil, Mexico y Peru," in *Foro International*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2 (1990); Guy Hermet, "LAmérique Latine entre Démocratie et Populisme," in *L'Année Internationale* (1990-19910, pp. 211-216.

49. Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

50. See Peter Wiles, "A Syndrome, not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism, in Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-179; Worseley, *ibid.*, pp. 212-250.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 4. Donald McRae, "Populism as an Ideology," *ibid.*, pp. 157-158; Wiles, *op. cit.*, p. 67; Angus Stewart, "The Social Roots," *ibid.*, p. 192; and Kenneth Minogue, "Populism as a Political Movement," *ibid.*, p. 198.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conviction that there is a plot organized by "alien" forces against "the people" (however defined). Consequently, populism appeared as an "anti-ism" and a "negativism"[52]: ideologically anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-urban, anti-Semitic, anti-foreigner, xenophobic, etc. The article on populism in the new *Dictionaire des Idée Reçus* also defines it in terms of: "to be against." Once again, it implies a double meaning: "populism is the act of being against"/"one should be against populism." This polemical structure, which constitutes the populist attitude, can be found in many different historical contexts where populist movements have appeared (Russia and America in the 19th century; Europe and the Third World in the 20th century), and associated with three distinctive ideological-political orientations: socialism, nationalism and agrarianism.[53] It follows that populism is compatible with democracy (both as an ideal and as a regime) as well as with anti-democratic political orders ranging from authoritarianism to totalitarianism. Populism is a *dimension* of political action, susceptible to syncretisms with all forms of movements and all types of governments. Thus a single party dictatorship can legitimate itself by populist means, while a liberal-pluralist democracy does not rule out the possibility of a seizure of power by a populist leader through normal voting procedures. Whether dimension or style rather than ideology or form of mobilization, populism is so elastic and indeterminate as to discourage all attempts at a rigorous definition.

In order to avoid verbal squabbles, it may be better to take a strictly nominalist position and abandon the useless search for features common to all historical phenomena designated as "populist." By deploying Occam's razor, the false problem of the unity of all populisms or of their common identity can be eliminated. Discussing populism as an ambiguous term ("populisms" as simple homonyms), it may be possible finally to undertake concrete research concerning particular phenomena such as

---

52. Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, p. 4. For a different interpretation of American populism, see Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise. The Populist Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Canovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 49ff.; and Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Emergence of Federal Populism," in *Telos* 89 (Fall 1991), p. 13.

53. Often populism has come as "a variety of nationalism," where its specificity consisted in joining entities such as "the nation" and "the people." See Angus Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 183. Thus one can assume that all forms of populism imply a more or less stated nationalist component. Swiss populism shows that national integration can obtain without recourse to cultural homogenization by an authoritarian center: Switzerland "has never invested much in the nation." See Regina Bendix, "National Sentiment in the Enactment and Discourse of Swiss Political Ritual," in *American Ethnologist*, No. 19 (1992), p. 784. See also Michael Schudsen, "La Culture et l'Intègration des Sociétés Nationales," in *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales*, No. 139 (February, 1994), p. 80.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Russian populism in the second half of the 19th century," "Peronist populism," "Thatcherian populism," etc. As such, populism becomes a simple label free of all theoretical baggage and of some use to working historians. In this case, however, why keep the term "populism," full of ambiguities and confusion? Because recourse to the same term forces scholars to come up with a common definition.

Margaret Canovan,[54] has taken a middle course and suggested a typology distinguishing between *agrarian* and political populism.[55] Agrarian populism can be divided into three types: 1) The *radicalism of the farmers* in the Western and Southern parts of the US (the People's Party in 1890, whose objective was to place the governing of the Republic in the hands of simple folks). The American Populist movement faded away shortly after the defeat of the democratic populist candidate, William Jennings Bryan, in the 1896 presidential elections.[56] 2) East European *peasant movements*, such as the peasant populist parties in Rumania.[57] 3) *The agrarian socialism of intellectuals*, whose prototype is Russian populism based on the idealization of rural communitarianism. Canovan distinguishes four types of political populism, modern phenomena presupposing the national mobilization of the masses on the basis of the democratic idea of the sovereignty of the people: 1. a populist dictatorship based on the Peronist model — the authoritarian regime of the "national-populist" type defined by Gino Germani; 2. a populist democracy based on referenda, as exemplified by the Swiss model; 3. a reactionary populism in the nationalist/racist style, exemplified by George Wallace in the US; and 4. "the populism of the politician," i.e., an appeal to the unity of the people, beyond ideologico-political divisions.

This typology can be used to characterize certain syncretic instances of contemporary populist mobilizations. Thus, it is possible to characterize

---

54. Canovan, *op. cit.*, p. 351. Shils provides the most general among those privileging ideological content: "Populism proclaims that the will of the people is supreme over every other standard . . . . Populism identifies the will of the people with justice and morality." See Edward A. Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy* (London: William Heinemann, 1956), p. 98. See also Worsley, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-245; Canovan, *op. cit.*, p. 4ff. and 182ff.; Jorgen Goul Anderson, "Denmark: the Progressive Party — Populist Neo-liberalism and Welfare State Chauvinism," in Paul Hainsworth, ed., *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1992), p. 195. Hermet sees this definition as the scholarly reformulation of a widespread cliché concerning Latin-American populist leaders such as Varga. See Hermet, *op. cit.*, p. 290. It is the legitimating self-representation of a dictator, anxious to establish his benevolent sovereignty over "the popular will."

55. Canovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-16 and 136ff.

56. *Ibid.*, p.p. 17ff. See especially Norman Pollack, ed., *The Populist Mind* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) pp. xix-xlviii.

57. For an overview of "agrarian populism," see Canovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-135.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thatcherism as a "mixture of the populism of the politician and reactionary populism." [58] As for Lepenist populism, judging by both its orthodox discourse, its leader' behavior and its type of mobilization, it seems to be a mixture of Bonapartism, reactionary populism with a national-xenophobic dominance — maybe even racist — tendency, Swiss-style democratic populism (direct democracy through referenda) and of "the politician's populism" emphasizing an appeal to the people on non-ideological grounds — with "moral," "traditional," "natural" or "good sense" values substituting for ideology — in order to achieve interclass unity.

Within this perspective, "national populism" seems to apply, with one qualification: while Lepenist national populism well exemplifies what Burrin calls its "ideology of national unity," [59] it is definitely not an ideology of the "third way," as it is strictly Right wing ("a national, social and popular Right") and defends a kind of "popular" capitalism. This implies certain ambiguities: against socialism, it defends economic liberalism, but against the globalism of "free trade" it vents a xenophobic protectionism.[60] Five traits allow for the construction of an ideal type of Lepenist national-populism, taking into consideration the demagogical nature of the leader (before taking power: national-populism as a movement, not as a regime), the values celebrated in orthodox discourse and the kind of "popular" mobilization being sought:

1) The political appeal to *the people:* a *personal* appeal to the people, whose symbolic impact presupposes the charismatic authority of the leader-demogogue able to embody the social and political movement. The populist party must be hyperbolically personalized;[61]

2) The appeal to the *entire people*, with no distinctions of class, ideological tendencies or cultural categories. The populist objective is the realization of interclass unity. This criterion must take into account the composition of the National Front's real electorate, which turns out to be

---

58. Monica Charlot, "Doctrine et Image: Le Thatchérisme ast-il un Populisme?" in Jacques Leruez, ed., *Le Thatchérisme. Doctrine et Action* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1984), pp. 19-21.

59. Philippe Burrin, "La France dans le Champ Magnétique des Fascismes," in *Le Débat* 32 (November 1984), pp. 52-72; and Burrin, *La Dérive Fasciste*, *op. cit.*

60. "A free market system without restraints destroys the national economy for the sole profit of cosmopolitan ideology." See The National Front, *Programme de Gouvernment. 300 Mesures pour la Renaissance de la France* (Paris: Editions Nationales, 1993), p. 127. For a location of these positions within the evolution of the orthodox doctrine, see Pierre-André Taguieff, "Un Programme 'Révolutionaire'?" in Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau, eds., *Le Front National à Découvert* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1989), pp. 195-227.

61. Pierre-André Taguieff, "La Rhetorique du National-populisme," *op. cit.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more and more "popular" and, after 1994, the most "popular" of all electorates (21% of blue-collar workers at the June, 1994 European elections, of compared to 17% for Tapie and 9% for the French Communist Party;[62]

3) The *direct* appeal to the *authentic* people, and to them alone, defined as "sane," "simple," "honest," gifted with an allegedly infallible "instinct" to do good. This third trait allows a correction of the second one, which it contradicts: the ambiguity of the people (*dêmos*) resurfaces with "the people" being at the same time the *whole* and *part* of the people — the supposedly "sane" part. All demagogues, especially nationalist ones, play with both these meanings. The energy, the goodness and the generosity attributed to the people makes them both "good children" and "*bon-vivants*." They are therefore closer to (good) nature than elites living in an artificial and cut-throat world.[63] Allegedly, they are culturally intact, free of foreign influences, uncontaminated by the "mental Aids" affecting elites "cut off from the people."[64] This implies a double indictment of illegitimate elites (feudal remnants, financial oligarchies, lobbies, cosmopolitans, bureaucracy, technocracy, partitocracy, "the gang of four," etc.) and of the influence, or even of the foreign cultural domination articulated through these corrupted and corrupting elites (the threat of cultural Americanization, cultural colonialization, etc.). The appeal to the authentic people goes hand in hand with the denunciation of the "invasion" of the country by "undesirable" and/or "dangerous" foreigners, susceptible to taking on the repulsive appearance of the parasite or the terrorist (the marginal, violent,

62. See Pascal Perrineau, "Le Front National: du Désert à l'Enracinement," in Pierre-André Taguieff, ed., *Face au Racisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), pp. 83-104; Pascal Perrineau, "L'Élection Européenne au Miroir de l'Hexagone," in *Le Vote des Douze* (Paris: Départment d'Études Politiques du Figaro et Presses de la FNSP, 1995), p. 245; and Jérôme Jaffré, "1995, Année Faste pour le Front National," in *Le Monde* (June 17, 1995), pp. 1 and 15.

63. Populist rhetoric thus resurrects the myth of the noble savage "endowed with an instinct more infallible than the reasoning of those civilized who are tired and corrupt." See R. Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 106. The mythology of the people is based on a number of representations constituting the live-wire of populism as an intepretative attitude (simplicity, purity, lack of corruption, innocence, naturalness, holiness, solidarity), mixing moralism and primitivism. See Wiles, *op. cit.*, p. 4.; Isaiah Berlin, *A Contre-Courant: Essais sur l'Histoire des Idées*, tr. by A. Berelowitch (Paris: Albin Michel, 1988), p. 330; Bourricaud, op. *cit.*, pp. 203-204; and Claude Grignon and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Le Savant et le Populaire: Misérabilisme et Populisme en Sociologie et en Littérature* (Paris: Gallimard-Le Seuil, 1989), pp. 32-34.

64. "Rendre le Pouvior au Peuple," in *Lettre d'Information du Club de L'Horloge*, No. 30 (1987), pp. 1-9; Jean-Pierre Stirbois, "Démocratie: Rendre la Parole au Peuple," in Jean-Pierre Stirbois, *Tonnerre de Dreux, L'Avenir nous Appartient* (Paris: En Editions National-Hebdo, March 1988), p. 116; and Pierre-Andé Taguieff, "De la Démocratie Direct," in *Republique*, No. 8 (Winter 1989/1990), pp. 101-113, and No. 9 (Spring/Summer, 1990), pp. 121-130.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and/or drug addicts, constituting a synthesis warranting the most demonization). The celebration of the authentic people tends to be confused with the celebration of the "original national population" supposedly threatened by an "immigration-invasion" (the "global immigration"). Populist rhetoric not only resuscitates the myth of the noble savage with its combination of moralism and primitivism,[65] it also associates it with the nationalist mythology of identity, homogeneity and unity of the people, of *this* particular people: this is because the people are virtuous, they are sane and simple, and this virtue gives them the energy needed to unify the national forces. The *direct* appeal to the people as such operates along two main parameters: on one hand, the dream of the political order without any mediations associated with abstract and complex systems of representation, opening up a utopian space where the principle of the people's sovereignty is retranslated into pure self-government (direct democracy means the people's autonomy); on the other hand, the fixation on the dreams of trust, transparency, purity and unity predicated on the idealized face-to-face encounter between the "leader" and his "people" (direct democracy here illustrates a type of charismatic authority indistinguishable from plebiscitary democracy). Thus, the people's authenticity is constructed on the denunciation of more or less invisible hostile powers: denunciation of the "ones on top" or the "ones up front" (anti-elitism), or "from somewhere else" (xenophobia) — which is often confused with "the ones at the bottom" (the new dangerous and ethnicized classes). The dream of transparency announced by the call for direct democracy (limited to referenda of popular initiatives) has to turn to the theory of the *plot*. Not only must all of the country's misfortunes be explainable in terms of negative powers, but the obstacles met by the national-populist movement — and, of course, its failures — can only be explained by the existence of a plot meant to dominate or destroy "France." The theory of the plot has the advantage of providing a pseudo-causal explanation of the movement's "deterioration" and failures (it is the fault of Jewish intervention, of the Masons, etc.);

4) The call for purification or redemptive *rupture*. The call for a *change* in the state of things translates in various ways: as a call to break with the established disorder, to finally abolish the predominant corruption, to ruin the elites who have betrayed the people, to radically break with "the system," and to carry out a "Second French Revolution" which

65. Hermet, *op. cit.*, pp. 290-291. The mythical dimension does not at all rule out its exploitation nor its tactical-strategic deployment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will be the "real one."[66] The change appeals to so-called "traditional" values presented as "natural" (order, authority, hierarchy; work, family, homeland, religious/moral values). In orthodox discourse, it is the "principle of national preference" which leads to "reactionary" change, legitimating discrimination in the job market and expulsion of "undesirable strangers." Accompanied by the deterioration of the welfare state and the reintroduction of the death penalty (the "cornerstone" of the penal system), these measures constitute an authoritarian model: Lepenism is part of that "authoritarian populism" some political or sociological analysts have identified as the predominant ideological configuration at the end of the 1970s, and was later exemplified by Thatcherism and Reaganism.[67] "Authoritarian populism" is one of the paths leading to the destruction of hegemonic social-democratic structures within Western pluralistic democracies. Its objective is "post-socialism": a break with socialism identified with the welfare state. Such is the political meaning of the rupture demanded by populist leaders: a new consensus around both poles, the market and "national preference." Yet, while the logic of economic liberalism is globalism, the logic of "national preference" is economic protectionism. This tension between the two projects of authoritarian national-populism translates clumsily, even contradictorily, within programmatic positions. Nationalism or globalism: the dilemma reappears within the doctrinal space of the new populism;

5) Lepenist national-populism differs from the populism of the Bonapartist tradition appealing to an ideology of national unification (of which Gaullism constitutes the most recent example) in its explicit appeal to discriminate among individuals in terms of ethnic origin or cultural characteristics, and the more or less euphemistic call for the expulsion (the "return to the homeland" of immigrants of non-European origin) of ethno-cultural groups considered "unassimilable" and otherwise variously stigmatized. As unifier and assimilator, Gaullist nationalism rejects the idea that there are ethnic or cultural *a priori* limits to French society's ability to integrate foreigners (individuals or groups). Its populist dimension is free of any mythology of self-referential "pure" ethnic origins (we the "true" French) contraposed to "them" (the "unassimilable ones"). On

66. Jean-Marie Le Pen, "Pour une Vraie Révolution Française," in *National-Hebdo*, No. 62 (September 26, 1985), p.3. See also Taguieff, "Un Programme 'Révolutionaire'?" *op. cit*, pp. 197ff.

67. See Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, eds., *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), especially pp. 19-39; and Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, (London, 1988), pp. 7 and 123-160.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the contrary, Lepenist national-populism is characterized by a selective xenophobia inextricable from the appeal for national unity: its appeal to the people is discriminatory; its national unity, selective. The latter operates according to two variables: to guarantee the unity of the original people, identical and homogeneous, and to incorporate those supposedly assimilable elements defined ethnically (as white and European) and culturally (as Christian, preferably Catholic) with the French people.

Here Gaullist and Lepenist populism represent two ideal-typical French nationalisms coexisting since the end of the 19th century: the *nationalism of assimilation*, tied to republican patriotism, and the *nationalism of exclusion*, tied to the anti-republican reaction.[68] The racism implicit in the Lepenist principle of "national preference" needs further qualification. It is not inappropriate here to consider this selective xenophobia, founded on a hierarchical scale of preferences and rejections according to ethno-cultural origins, a variant of *differentialist racism*.[69] Its hard core is the absolutization of ethnic and/or cultural difference. Its motivating passion is its obsessive fear of contact, which can also be expressed as a phobia of mixing. The demagogic instrumentalization of the differentialist theme does not rule out recourse to traditional unequal representations within the "races."[70] Lepenist mobilization feeds essentially on imaginary, irreducible, incurable inter-ethnic differences, which implies the conviction that there are natural categories of unassimilable foreigners (i.e., according to culture) threatening the proper identity of the "national community."

The unassimilability of certain categories of "foreigners" (embodied in absolute and fixed collective identities) summarizes the central conviction of Lepenist populism: the combination of a differentialist racism predicated on this essentialization of collective identities with nationalism. Le Pen thinks national populations are quasi-races, whose attitudes and behaviors are determined by invariable mental forms or cultural traits forever separating people. As such, cultural identities take on the form of various human natures. Differentialist and cultural racism does not deny the zoological unity of man, but argues for the essential division of human kind in quasi historico-cultural species, separated by mental boundaries impossible to cross.

---

68. See Rogers Brubaker, "De l'Immigré au Citoyen," in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, No. 99 (September 1993), pp. 23-25; and Pierre-André Taguieff, "L'Identité Nationale: un Débat Francais," in *Regards Sur L'Actualité*, No. 209-210 (March-April 1995), pp. 19-20.

69. Pierre-André Taguieff, *La Force de Préjugé* (Paris: La Découverte, 1988).

70. Pierre-André Taguieff, "L'Identité Nationale Saisie par les Logiques de Racisation," in *Mots*, No. 12 (March 1986), pp. 89-126.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Populism as Protest and as Identity

The word "populism" should not be traced back to its roots, nor should it be restricted to its lexical definition (around "people/popularity"). A preliminary approach to political populism can be the simple distinction between two poles of "populist" discourse: the *protest* and the *identitarian* poles or, more precisely, the *protest/social* and the *identitary/national* pole, defining the hard core of "national-populism" in the strict sense. This distinction is ideal-typical and only approximates or imperfectly exemplifies some particular political movements. These two poles, which may be seen as two dimensions or components of all political populism, presuppose a polemical dimension (to be populist is, first of all, "to be against").

Protest Populism. In this first type, the appeal to the people is meant primarily as a criticism or denunciation of elites, be they political, administrative, economic or cultural. This anti-elitism is inextricably tied to a trust in the people, defined as ordinary citizens. That is why, on the basis of the opposition between actual elites (otherwise legitimate) and the people, this type of populism can be described as hyper-democratism, idealizing the image of active citizens distrustful of systems of representation presumably threatening to deprive them of their power or initiative. The distinction between elites and the people can take the form of a Manichean opposition between those "at the top" (the "legal" country) and those "at the bottom" (the "real" country): the intensity of the protest depends on it. This double critique, targeting elites and representation, justifies a political project focused on the reduction of the distance between the people and those who govern in the name of a direct democracy presumed to favor active citizens. This is the positive face of this first type of political populism: to idealize direct democracy and to reinforce certain institutional tools which allow it to function.

The main tool of populist democracy is referendum and, more specifically, popular initiative, which allows the bypassing of political or administrative mediations (the short-circuiting of the representative system), since under certain conditions voters can take the legal initiative through referendum. This first type of political populism has, as its main characteristic, the challenge or critique of the system of social and political representation. It is found in attitudes, movements or protest ideologies, which practice the "tribunitarian" function (Georges Lavaux): from communist parties to ecology movements, from regionalist or autonomist movements (challenging national representation) to liberal parties criticizing the welfare state system. This liberal populism finds its embodiment in the Austrian Liberal party (the FPÖ), led by Jörg Haider since September of 1986: "Our populism," he stated in 1990, "simply means:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to represent what is beneficial to the citizens and not to the red functionaries (the socialists) and the black ones (the Christian Democrats)."[71] In Haider, the appeal to the people, in all its shapes and forms, implies a denunciation of established systems of political representation, symbolized by "the old parties" (Christian Democrat and Socialist) or, in Le Pen's case, the "gang of four."[72] Its most efficient mode of legitimation consists in demanding more democracy.

To this sometimes hyperbolic demand for *democratization* one could add some features of populist discourse, which allow it to be identified as right-wing: 1) *Anti-Intellectualism*, implying the exaltation of the spontaneous power of the people's ancestral wisdom — people who know what suits them better than their distant leaders: "the citizens below often have a better sense of things than these high ministers of politics who think they can explain to people what moves them."[73] This anti-intellectual dimension distinguishes the populism of the Austrian Liberal Party from the populism of the ecologists, urging citizens to be informed and to have discussions.[74] 2) *Hyper-personalization of the movement*, through the leader's charismatic figure: Haider in Austria, Le Pen in France. In both cases, rosy and edifying legends are broadly disseminated: the leader's exemplary life and enviable virility are emphasized, along with his ability to stay in touch or in communication with the people, which depicts him as "close" to them and distinguishes him from all other politicians. 3) The defense of the *values of economic liberalism*, indistinguishable from those of small businesses and private property — the preferential protection of certain social categories such as liberal professions, small and

71. Jörg Haider, interview in *Profil*, No. 32 (August 6, 1990). The FPÖ has gone from 16.63% of the votes in 1990 to 22.64% in the 1994 legislative elections. On the new Austrian populism, see Anton Pelinka, ed., *Populismus in Österreich* (Vienna: Junius, 1987); F. Lövenich, "Dem Volk aufs Maul: Überlegungen zum Populismus," in *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, No. 1 (March 1989), p. 22-31; Patrick Hassenteufel, "Structures de Représentation et 'Appel au Peuple': Le Populisme en Autriche," in *Politix*, No. 14 (Second Trimester 1991), pp. 99-101. On "right-wing populism" in certain European countries, see Patrick Moreau, "Europe: la Tentation Populiste," in *Politique Internationale*, No. 66 (Winter 1994/1995), pp. 111-127.

72. See Hassenteufel, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 and 97.

73. Jörg Haider, interview on Austrian television, November 13, 1986, cited by Hassenteufel, *op. cit.*, p. 99; see also, "Une Autre Voix pour L'Autriche? (Entretien avec J. Haider)," *Politique Internationale*, No. 66 (Winter 1994/1995), p. 138: "It is necessary to reduce the influence of the parties and to let citizens speak, primarily through referenda of popular initiative."

74. Hassenteufel, *op. cit*, p. 99. On the anti-intellectualism of populist movements, see Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1979); Werner W. Ernst, "Zu einer Theorie des Populismus," in Pelinka, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 12; Lövenich, *op. cit.*; Hainsworth, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 ff; and Canovan, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

average size entrepreneurs, farmers, etc. (the so-called middle classes).[75] Other social categories tend to be stigmatized as parasites (first and foremost, the functionaries) or as dangerous deviants (artists, potential drug addicts and/or homosexuals). This is the old theme of "popular capitalism," which comes increasingly close to economic protectionism.

Identitarian Populism (National Populism). In the second type of populism, the appeal to the people is defined primarily by its fixation on the *national* dimension. It is an appeal to the whole people, supposedly homogeneous (despite class divisions), which is confused with a national group gifted with a permanent unity and identity. It is the presence of this identitarian/national dimension which allows the categorization of the Lepenist movement as "national-populist," despite the fact it also includes a protest, anti-elitist or anti-establishment dimension. The main difference from the *first type consists in what is most important to criticize, denounce, reject:* less those "at the top" than those "up front," less the elites than the foreigners. More precisely: elites are rejected to the extent that they are perceived as "the party of foreigners." Here anti-elitism is subordinated to xenophobia: Populism combined with nationalism reconfiguring the enemy as the foreigner-invader. The identitarian dimension takes on an *exclusionary* character. The defense of national identity implies the denunciation of the "immigration invasion": national identity is defended as long as it is supposedly threatened with disappearance, violent death. The demand for democratization becomes secondary, even decorative. The *defense* of identity takes priority. This gives rise to a principled heterophobia, which can take the form of a racist (biologizing) or neo-racist (cultural) doctrine.

Consider France's national populism, embodied in the Lepenist movement, along with its orthodox discourse. The national populist doctrine is constructed around two parallel oppositions: French/foreigners, people/anti-people. "Anti-France" is the classic version of the foreigner-enemy. The absolutization of *French identity* is inseparable from the demonization of the "cosmopolitan," the foreigner-enemy within. Two textual illustrations will suffice[76]: "Jean-Marie Le Pen is . . . the only candidate of a *new*

---

75. Hassenteufel, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

76. See Jean Madiran, "Postface à une Candidature," in Alain Sanders, Francis Bergeron and Rémi Fontaine, *Le Pen: Le Livre Blanc d'un Phénomène* (Avignon: L'Orme Rond, 1988), p. 80; Bruno Mégret, "En France Aujord'hui: un Totalitarisme Larvé," in *Présent*, No. 1739 (January 13, 1989), p. 3. For a critical analysis, see Pierre-André Taguieff, "Antisémitisme Politique et National-Populisme en France dans les Années 1980," in Pierre Birnbaum, ed., *Histoire Politique des Juifs de France: Entre Universalisme et Particulisme* (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1990), pp. 125-150.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

majority, that of the *French France* which refuses to become a *Foreign France*."(Jean Madiran). "In the same way that we are the party of the French against the party of foreigners, we are also the party of the people against latent totalitarianism" (Bruno Megret).

Lepenist journalists decode everyday events along Manichean lines: "defenders of French identity *versus* cosmopolitans representing the anti-France." This is how, in the Lepenist newspaper *Present* of January 20, 1993, in commenting on the rally "*Harlem Désir á Génération Ecologie*," Jean Cochet deploys the satanic representation of the "cosmopolitan" enemy, foreign to and destroyer of French identity — and all national identity — to describe ecologists whom he characterizes as ". . . born along with the 1968 Left and the hippie vogue, the mystico-pacifists and Rousseaueans of the 1970's, thus reaffirm (through adherence to Harlem's "Désir") their Third-World tendencies and their complete acceptance of the theses and objectives of the pro-immigration lobby. The great, global melting pot where men, robbed of any national, cultural or religious identity will be nothing more than consumers, vague statistics on the computers of technocracy and international finance — this is the goal towards which they aim."[77]

On the occasion of the announcement of "7 d'Or" award for the best report by a "special correspondent" on the National Front, on Monday, January 18, 1993, the Lepenist journalist Alain Sanders interprets the phenomenon according to the Manichean dualism of nationalist orthodoxy, "French/Christian France" versus "Anti-France": "On Monday night, it is the French France, the Christian France, which was soiled, dirtied and humiliated. This was an explicit attempt to trample those who, despite everything, resist the anti-France."[78]

Mythical Ambivalence, Political Ambiguity. The mythical structure of populism should also be emphasized. It presents itself as a "mythical entity"[79] in that it seeks to purify identity as well as to *abolish the distance* separating the people from the elites — especially governing elites. Back to the roots (the *völkisch* pole) or desire for communion and transparency. . . . or at least the dream of immediacy, and of bringing about immediacy. Populist discourse relies on myth when it proposes to reconcile, through an appeal to the people, whatever in social reality absolutely resists reconciliation.[80]

---

77. Jean Cochet, "Comme ça, c'est Clair: Harlem Désir, President du Mouvement Action Egalité, Adhère à Génération Ecologie," in *Present*, No. 2746 (January 20, 1993), p. 2.
78. Alain Sanders, in *Present* (January 20, 1993), p. 1.
79. See Alain Pessin, *Le Mythe du Peuple et la Société Français* (Paris: PUF, 1992).
80. Wieviorka, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The by now classical works on Latin American populism[81] have shown the centrality of the theme of unification of the social body, referring to a unified image of the people. Populism promises to eliminate the distance between the social and the political, but this promise can only be realized in an imaginary domain.[82] The populist promise to reconcile economic modernization, cultural identity (national or regional) and political power, of reintegrating what is fragmented (the economic, the cultural and the political) is also mythical. The populist myth can also be seen in the dream of conciliation of past and future,[83] in the defense of particular heritages (the identitarian dimensions), and in the call for active participation in city life or even progressive movements (the "democratist" pole). Here is where it finds direct democracy, the utopia of pure democracy, free of representative mediations, where the people are at the same time both those who govern and those who are governed, those who institute and those who are instituted: the dream of transparency.

By privileging this type of approach, it is possible to elaborate a simple and intelligible model: the heart of the populist myth is to reconcile opposites and reharmonize contradions. This ideal of reconciliation is typical of most modern ideologies or political myths. The political imaginary of populism appears as a secularized expression of Hegel's theologico-polical ideal of *Versöhnung*.[84] In other words, the ideal of reconciliation is not unique to populism and does not distinguish it from various current "isms." It is possible, however, to provide a stipulative definition designating by the "populist dimension" the imaginary of reconciliation in most modern political myths, from nationalism to socialism, anarchism to fascism. As mythical discourse sublimating social violence, populism still fails to achieve specificity. Populism does not sublimate "dangerous" passions either better or worse than other ideological configurations with a political or moral orientation (humanitarian, anti-exclusionist, etc.). The substitution of verbal

81. Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism - Fascism - Populism* (London: NLB, 1977); E. de Ipola, "Populismo e Ideologia," in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología,* No. 3 (July-September 1979), pp. 925-960. For a critical introduction, see D. Pécaut, *op. cit.*, pp. 247ff.. Canovan chides Laclau for misunderstanding the irreducible diversity of populism and questions the reductionism of his Marxist theory of "populism." See Canovan, *op. cit.*, 1981, pp. 342-344, and *op. cit.*, 1977, pp. 172ff.

82. Pécaut, *op. cit.*, p.253.

83. Wieviorka, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78.

84. G. W. F. Hegel, *La Phénoménologie de l'Esprit* (1807), tr. by Jean Hyppolite (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1941), vol. II, pp. 197ff., 280ff. and 298. For a radical critique of the idea of final reconciliation, see Pierre-André Taguieff, *Les Fins de l'Antiracisme* (Paris: Michalon, 1995), pp. 357-516.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

violence (denunciation, stigmatization, etc.) for physical violence is not an exclusive characteristic of populism: all demagogic discourses twist, retranslate and transfigure aggressive compulsions and negative passions in order to exploit them symbolically. Far from denoting a specific feature of populism, what is at stake here is something typical of demagoguery. The latter, however, must be dealt with in a less summary manner.

It may be more useful to approach populism according to the hypothesis that it consists in the production of an illusion founded on the erasure of relations of strength and domination by deploying relativist or culturally pluralist evidence to transfigure the state of poverty and to idealize all the people's cultural identities. The populist exaltation of a dominated culture goes back to "suggesting a symbolic self-sufficiency of the dominated culture, which deprives the dominators of all the privileges resulting from their domination: 'poor people have their universe and it is worth as much as ours'."[85] In this sense, if populism retranslates all social differences as cultural specificity, those advocating the interests of the downtrodden interpret all differences in relation to the predominant framework as a deficiency, a halt in development; in short, an absence.[86] In both legitimating operations one can notice the naturalization of the existing social state of affairs. Celebrated or deplored, even stigmatized, predominant relations of domination are converted into natural necessities through the "wealth" of differences or the "poverty" of deficiencies. Populists sanctify difference in a positive way, whereas advocates of social justice do so in a negative way.

In the scholarly usages of "populism" there is a fundamental tension between its two definitions, long since brought to light by John S. Saul: populism as hyper-democratism and as anti-modern reaction.[87] On one hand, populism may be defined as an ideology according to which "legitimacy resides in the will of the people," therefore embodying the ideal of radical democracy.[88] Here populism corresponds to direct democracy. Thus, the populist leader's particular protest style could be characterized

---

85. Jean-Claude Passeron, *Le Raisonnement Sociologique: l'Espace Non-Poppérien du Raisonnement Naturel* (Paris: Nathan, 1991), p. 256.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 255-256. See also Grignon and Passeron, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11, 33-44 and 68-69; and "Un Savant et le Populaire: Entretien avec Claude Grignon," in *Politix*, No. 13 (1991), pp. 37-40.

87. John S. Saul, "Africa," in Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, pp.122-123.

88. Lloyd Fallers, "Populism and Nationalism," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 4, No. 447 (July 1964), cited by Saul, *op. cit.*, p. 122. See also John S. Saul, "On African Populism," in Giovanni Arrighi and John S. Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (New York: Monthy Review Press, 1973).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as *democratist extremism*. But populism may also be seen as a reaction or a response which comes up "everywhere capitalism appears in a traditional peasant society." This resistance expresses an "ideology of the little rural people threatened by industrial usurpation and the capitalist financier."[89] The historically codified expressions of this reactive, maybe even reactionary orientation, are the people's "anti-capitalism" analyzed by Barrington Moore, Jr.,[90] and that more or less radical opposition to the bourgeoisie Renzo de Felice has brilliantly identified in Italian fascism, or in"what is improperly called fascism" in Europe or the Third World.[91]

This generates a new ambiguity. Here populism may be understood either as a reactionary rejection of the modern world or as a "penetrating critique of industrial society."[92] Its *anti-capitalism* is susceptible to a double political reading, presupposing a denunciation of savage modernization: a traditional and a socialist reading. Beyond this ambiguity, a common presupposition of all versions of populism is a commitment to the nation. But if all populism presupposes such a nationalist commitment, this nationalism can be explicit or implicit. Populisms vary in nationalist intensity. It follows that all populisms are in some way national-populisms. This claim may be challenged by the alleged existence of leftist versions of populism which, adapted to current values and beliefs among contemporary elites (the globalization of trade and communication interpreted as proof of entry into a "global era"), see themselves as anti-nationalist. Consider Bernard Tapie, whose public pro-Europe declarations could be understood as entailing that his populism is radically denationalized. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that the demagogy of this "atypical" leader targets at the same time the people-nation (the people as a whole: "the French") and the people-plebe. Against this target, Tapie's demagogy develops an indirect or veiled nationalism, along two lines: to be a "good" and/or a "true" French one must be a "European," meaning (abusively) a partisan of the Europe envisioned by the Maastricht Treaty; to be one of the "winning French,"

89. Peter Worsley, *The Third World* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), cited by John S. Saul, "Africa," *op. cit.*, p. 123; and John S. Saul, "The Concept of Populism," in Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230 and 239-240. For a critical examination, see Canovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-267.

90. Barrington Moore, Jr., *Les Origines Sociales de la Dictature et de la Démocratie*, tr. by P. Clinquart (Paris: La Découverte/Maspero, 1983), p. 357.

91. Renzo De Felice, *Le Interpretazioni del Fascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1969). 1975).

92. Kenneth Minogue, "Populism as a Political Movement," in Ionescu and Gellner, *op. cit.*, p. 209; see also Norman Pollack, *The Populist Response to Industrial America: Midwestern Populist Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); and Canovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one must follow Bernard Tapie, "the winner," the potential chief of "enterprise France." To this more or less patriotic (*cocardière*) dimension, the second target adds a social and "popular" coloration, through a publicized plebianism in terms of empathy for "those who are excluded." Veiled nationalism here is wedded to a dreamy socialism.

If a demagogue is an individual who "leads the people" and, more precisely, one who practices the "art of leading the people while keeping its favor," the public (*dêmos)* targeted by demagogical discourse goes back to the previously mentioned equivocation about the "people" as a whole or a part.[93] The ambiguity of the word *dêmos* has often been emphasized by historians and scholars. "This word designates, on the one hand, the civic body as a whole, e.g., in the first words of official decrees taken by a democratic assembly in Greece — 'the *dêmos* has decided,' — but, on the other, it also applies to the common folk, to the crowd, to the poor. . . ."[94] In *Gorgias*, Plato treats the confusing "demagogues" with disdain because they force-feed the people with material goods.[95] This ambiguity can also be found in the latin word *populus*, which oscillates between two meanings: "The whole of the residents of a constituted state or of a city" (the people as a whole), and the "whole of non-noble citizens and, after that, the multitude, the populace"[96] — in brief, the "low" part of the people. Sometimes this ambiguity is useful. "The ambiguity of *dêmos* (*plebs* or *populus*) is for the best. The adversaries of democracy can take it in its first meaning . . . while budding democrats can invoke the second one." [97] "In all contexts, everyone knew what it was all about: Greek and Roman writers and speakers used to go from one meaning to the next without being afraid of being misunderstood, and when they wanted to criticize democracy, they played freely with the words *dêmos* and *populus*, without compromising intelligibility." In the modern notion of "demagogy," this constitutive

93. See "Demogogue," in Alain Rey, ed., *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Francaise* (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1992), p. 573; Aristotle, *La Politique*, trans. J. Tricot (Paris: Vrin, 1970), pp. 357-361.

94. Moses I. Finley, *L'Invention de la Politique: Démocratie et Politique en Grèce et dans la Rome Républicaine*, tr. by J. Carlier (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), p. 22.

95. Platon, *Gorgias* 502e-519d; see also Finley, *op. cit.*, pp. 22 and 64; and Moses I. Finley, "Demagogues Athéniens," in *Economie et Société en Grèce Ancienne*, tr. by J. Carlier (Paris: La Découverte, 1984), p. 95.

96. See A. Rey, *op. cit.*, "Peuple," Vol. 2, p. 1496, and "Plèbe," Vol. 2, p. 1546. Departing from the ambiguity of the term *dêmos*, Giovanni Sartori distinguishes five interpretations of the "people" in *Théorie de la Démocratie*, tr. by C. Hurtig (Paris: Armand Colin, 1973), p. 15-17.

97. G. Vlastos, *Isonomia. Studien zur Gleichheitsvorstellung im Griechischen Denken* (Berlin, 1964), p. 8n.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ambiguity has not disappeared. In terms of how populism is used in ordinary political discourse, as the equivalent of "demagogy," the leader's particular populist audience is affected by the same variation of extension and comprehension: the people-nation and the people-plebe, from the "poor" to "those who are excluded" to "those who have been invaded."[98]

Globalization and the Transformation of Politics through the Media

The future of national-populism will be resistance to violent economic and communicative globalization (and thus of "culture"), with the appearance of supra-national forms of political sovereignty decided by international elites unconcerned with democracy. Sociopolitical reactions to the globalization of wild, post-national and post-democratic liberalism can take various forms: the reinvention of tradition, the polemical invention of ethnicity,[99] cultural-identitary resistance based on language or religion as symbolic resources exploited for their discriminating value,[100] populist mobilization

98. Finley, *L'Invention de la Politique*, *op. cit.*, p. 22; Finley, "Démagogue Athéniens," *op. cit.*, p. 92. The demagogue is simultaneously opportunistic and manipulative, as can be seen in this reply of Socrates to Callicles: "If you express an opinion and the people disagree with you, it is imperative that you yield and agree with them." See *Gorgias*, 481e; see also Jacqueline de Romilly, *Problèmes de la Démocratie Grecque* (Paris: Herman, 1975), p. 97. If demagogues and sophists have been associated so much, as flatterers and seducers of people in their personal interest, it is safe to assume the people are particularly responsive to flattery. See Thucydides, VIII, 48, 6. See also Silvia Montiglio, "Prises de Parole, Prises de Silence dans l'Espace Public Athénien," in *Politix*, No. 26 (1994), p. 40.

99. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Claudine Vidal, *Sociologie des Passions* (Côte-d'Ivoire, Rwanda) (Paris: Karthala, 1991); John Crowly, "Ethnicité, Nation et Contract Social," in Gil Delannoi and Pierre-Angré Taguieff, eds., *Théories du Nationalisme. Nation, Nationalité, Ethnicité* (Paris: Kimé, 1991), pp. 178-218); and Samir Amin (with Joseph Vansy), *L'Ethnie à l'Assault des Nations* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994). See also *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 11 (October 1989: "Ethnicity in World Politics"; and Philippe Poutignat and Jocelyne Streiff-Fenartm, *Théories de l'Ethnicité* (Paris: POF, 1995).

100. See, e.g., Michael Walzer, "Le Nouveau Tribalisme," in *Esprit* (November 1992), pp. 44-57; Bertrand Badie, *L'Etat Importé. L'Occidentalisation de l'Ordre Politique* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), pp. 229ff.; Bertrand Badie, Marie-Claude Smouts, *Le Retournement du Monde. Sociologie se ls Scène Internationale* (Paris: Presses de la FNSP et Dalloz, 1992); Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993); Ghassan Salamé, "Le Nationalisme Arabe: Mort ou Mutation?" in Jacques Rupnik, ed., *Le Déchirement des Nations* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1995), pp. 183-212. See also James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (London: McMillan, 1991); Walker Connor, *Ethno-nationalism, The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). On communitarian, neo-fundamentalist and neo-populist movements, understood as reactions to identity deficits generated by economic globalization, see Norberto Lechner, "A la Recherche de la Communité Perdue. Les Défis de la Démocratie en Amérique Latine," in *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales*, Vol. XLIII, No. 129 (August 1991), pp. 577-590.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the protest or of the identitary type, the emergence of ethno-nationalisms by taking over classical nationalist movements (based on the construction or consolidation of the nation-state). The rejection of globalization can be conditioned by the national-populist mold to end up into unprecedented forms of ethno-national dictatorships — new forms of authoritarian regimes whose main mode of legitimization will be this or that anti-globalist reformulation of the old communist-vintage anti-imperialism. The latter is likely to find a second symbolic life in and through "national-communist" mobilizations, arising from the neo-nationalism triggered by the disintegration of empires or trans-national states with or without federal structures.

The Westernization of the world is, first, the exportation of the "Western model of the liberal capitalist republic,"[101] i.e., of a transnational oligarchy, which has learned to instrumentalize the rules and procedures of representative and pluralist regimes. Liberal-capitalist Westernization follows two paths: on the one hand, the exploitation of political apathy, the boundless conformism encouraged by the media, the idealization of individual consumption in a society where the market has no frontiers; on the other, a struggle against all forms of identitarian or democratic resistance which challenges Westernization presented as global destiny. In the first case, Westernization operates under cover of a democratic consensus, by delegating power to experts (or technocrats). The new political elite rules in the name of its cognitive competency over a mass of individual consumers of signs and objects. In the second case, Westernization expands either through the violent destruction of islands of resistance (after total ideological war against "archaisms," "tribalisms," etc.) or by reaching compromises with authoritarian or totalitarian regimes (such as communist China) on the basis of economic accords — generalized commercialization seen as entailing the recognition of the overpowering "superiority" of the Western capitalist/liberal model. The "religion of progress" has turned into a religion of free trade without frontiers, whose "paradise" emerges from the marriage of the state (*État de droit*) and human rights. The social question fades with the political one: liberal capitalism is destiny. The absence of alternatives seals this fate, and the new categorical imperative demands to know what will follow. A new political fatalism is the result of the conviction that there is only one, obligatory path for history. One path and one way of thinking: intellectuals are invited to think what is projected as the destiny of humankind, characterized by the joining of media democracy and global markets.

101. Cornelius Castoriadis, "Un Monde à Venir" (interview with Olivier Morel), in *La République des Lettres*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (June 1994), p. 5.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The people's social and identitarian objections, whose disappearance is programmed by the Westernization process, will take more or less convulsive forms by emphasizing either the national or the religious dimension. Such is the legitimacy of resistance and revolts which, confronted with the invisible violence of Westernization, assumes a "nationalist" or "populist" face.

This is why, if the intellectual Left wants to engage once again in critical thought, it must first undertake a double critique: on the one hand, it must criticize economic liberalism as a worldview — a political or pseudo-political vision reducing human options to the optimization of the global market; on the other, a radical critique of identitarian reactions which take the form of neo-nationalist xenophobia, whose populist dimension is reinforced by the symbolic exploitation of media resources. Populism has already become tele-populism. The effective demagogue of postmodernity is the telegenic tribune. This necessitates the opening of a third front, where critical thought can be carried out: the video-political front.[102]

Recent metamorphoses of the Italian political system have experimental value: televisual communication becomes a substitute for democratic practices — something like the symbolic realization of the dream of "direct democracy." "Telepopulism" is video-demagogy; the demagogue acts on his audience by letting himself be seen more than understood. The contrast between the new televisual demagogy (Silvio Berlusconi) and the classical demagogy of the eloquent orator speaking to the public (Umberto Bossi) became clear precisely when an alliance was forming between the two generations of demagogues: one practicing a paradoxical elitist populism (the Northern League, defending the "best," i.e., those living in the North) and a regionalist/federalist populism; the other leaning toward a "populace" populism, transforming political communication into a mass spectacle. What is clear here is that television ceases to be merely an instrument of political parties. It becomes an independent actor in political contests,[103] having a major impact on the popularity of the political actors and what is being discussed. A more difficult question should be asked: whether "telepopulism" must be considered a depoliticizing factor, the starting point of political communication, or whether it should be interpreted as a new form of political confrontation. The depolitization thesis has recently been defended by

102. Giovanni Sartori, "Repenser la Démocratie: Mauvais Régimes et Mauvaises Politiques," in *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales*, Vol. XLIII, No. 129 (August 1991), pp. 476-477; and Oscar Landi, "Thèses sur la Vidéo-politique en Amerique Latine," in Amerique Latine," in *Amerique Latine. Démocratie et Exclusion*, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-231.

103. Michel Schudson, "La Culture et l'Intégration des Sociétés Nationales," in *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales*, Vol. XLVI, No. 13 (February 1994), p. 93.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

experts such as Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz: "Television depolitizes society, because it encourages people to stay home and contributes to giving them the illusion that they are playing a role in political life."[104] This criticism applies *a fortiari* to video-populism, which seems to provide new symbolic resources to any new *plebiscitary* enterprise where a media-constructed "savior" responds to the "desire of the masses."[105] Plebiscitary democracy may find in video-politics a new mode of operating. Identification with a media-constructed "savior" could produce an apathy on the part of those who are governed — citizens reduced to spectators, mere consumers of spectacles. In brief, the submission of the political to the media could foster a new version of "minor" people, treated as naturally incompetent or irresponsible. For partisans of an active or participatory democracy, this is a "democratic illness": a lowering of intensity equivalent to a dismissal of citizens — even bordering on an insensitive elimination of democratic life. "The question of democracy has to be posed because it cannot be practiced from the soft position of the 'distant' spectator instead of that of the active citizen who is like a partner. . . . Today the democratic illness is the cathodic anaesthesia of political life."[106]

One last ambiguity emerges from the fact that populism is present in both camps, with different modalities: as a reaction against globalization, populism is itself a media expression of globalization. This ideological plasticity and political indeterminacy complicates any intellectual or political battle it undertakes. It presents a surprising face to any critique. Populism seems to become stronger the more intellectuals criticize it. This is the new paradox and the polymorphic danger that must be confronted.

---

104. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 59.

105. Maurice Barrès suggests that the Boulanger "save" was always a creation of "mass desire.". See Michel Winok, *Nationalisme, Antisémitisme et Fascisme en France* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1990), p. 303.

106. Georges Balandier, *Le Pouvoir sur Scénes* (Paris: Balland, 1992), p. 11. To this new cultural pessimism, presupposing a certain elitism, is opposed the theorie of the emergence of a "new public space,' where the media is the privileged instrument of mass democracy. See Dominique Wolton, "Les Contradictions de l'Espace Public Médiatisé," in *Hermès*, No. 10 (1991), pp. 95-114.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert von Hallberg, Editor
University of Chicago
Lawrence Rainey, Editor
Yale University

MODERNISM / MODERNITY

Concentrating on the period extending roughly from 1860 to the present, *Modernism/Modernity* focuses systematically on the methodological, archival, and theoretical exigencies particular to modernist studies. It encourages an interdisciplinary approach linking music, architecture, the visual arts, literature, and social and intellectual history. The journal's broad scope fosters dialogue between social scientists and humanists about the history of modernism and its relations to modernization. *Published three times a year in January, April, and September.*

***Forthcoming issues** will include article clusters on Fascism and Culture, Wyndham Lewis, the Mind of Modernism, and more...*

Prepayment is required. **Annual Subscriptions:** $28.00, individuals; $56.00, institutions. **Single issue prices:** $9.50, individuals; $19.00, institutions. **Foreign postage:** $4.00, Canada & Mexico; $8.50, outside North America. Payment must be drawn on a U.S. bank in U.S. dollars or made by international money order. MD residents add 5% sales tax. For orders shipped to Canada, add 7% GST (#124004946).

Send orders with payment or credit card information to:
The Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211, U.S.A.

For fastest service, order by Visa or MasterCard:
Telephone: 1-800-548-1784 • Fax: (410) 516-6968
Email: jlorder@jhunix.hcf.jhu.edu. Please include name of the journal, length of subscription (one or two years), credit card number, expiration date, and your name, address, and daytime phone number.

EA-6

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Postmodern Populism

Paul Piccone

Today practically all American politicians tend to define themselves as "populists" at some time or other (usually just before elections), which is probably the surest indication that the general understanding of the concept is so vague as to denote everything and nothing.[1] Ross Perot has been described as a populist, but so have Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan. In political systems predicated on popular sovereignty, politicians allegedly "represent" the people and, therefore, must at least be "populist" in that minimal sense. On closer scrutiny, however, American populism turns out to designate something much more specific.[2] It is the particular historical form taken by that long-standing tradition of direct democracy, localism

1. This state of affairs is at least partly encouraged by *engagé* historians who, in the frantic effort to find extraneous props for faltering ideological frameworks, attempt to recycle and reinterpret populism by redescribing it in terms of conventional political categories. To the extent that populism has always transcended the standard Left-Right paradigm, however, the results have been frustrating. The usual conclusion they reach is that populism is nothing more than a rhetorical ploy with no particular political content. See, e.g., Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

2. See Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), pp. 177-178; and Robert McMath, Jr., *American Populism: A Social History (1877-1898)* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993). The original study which paved the way for recent reinterpretations of American populism is Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (New York: Oxford, 1976). Unfortunately, erudite as it may be, Lasch's account remains too embroiled in recent debates about the nature of republicanism and polemics concerning liberalism vs. communitarianism to articulate satisfactorily the *particularity* of American populism as a direct continuation of a nativist tradition developed out of the colonial experience. As a result, populism either fades into an amorphous Western past rooted as far back as the dawn of Athenian democracy, or is reduced to the level of a clumsy interlocutor of a triumphant liberalism and "bourgeois" ideology. In either case, what ends up occluded is precisely the *historical specificity* of American populism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and cultural specificity, which goes back a lot further than the latter part of the 19th century when populism first appeared as a distinct political movement. As such, it embodies the legacy of the colonial experience and carries on a distinct American democratic tradition predicated on autonomous self-governing communities. This relatively recent re-interpretation of populism within a broader historical and theoretical context, largely the work of revisionist historians during the past couple of decades, constitutes a radical break with predominant Cold War "end of ideology" readings of the phenomenon, hitherto canonized by influential sectors of both academia and the media. According to this earlier interpretation, populism was associated primarily with the darker side of popular rule: mob rule and collective irrationality reminiscent of the KKK, fascism, racism and the worst expressions of xenophobia.[3]

Today, both accounts coexist in popular consciousness. This paradoxical state of affairs is reflected by the mass media's ambivalent depiction of the phenomenon: the people are regarded both as the ultimate source of sovereignty *and* as the repository of deep-seated irrationality, necessitating the intervention of a wise elite able to capture collective sensibilities while restraining all other particularistic irrational impulses. What constitutes "collective sensibilities" and "irrational impulses," of course, is often determined primarily by various "wise elites" on the basis of particular Left or Right versions of the same basic New Class ideology.

---

3. Originally concerned with explaining the rise of fascism and Nazism (in Europe), and McCarthyism (in the US), "end of ideology" intellectuals such as Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell and Richard Hofstadter simply continued a sociological mode of analysis Lasch traces back to Robert Lynd — a liberal and social democratic tradition seeking to deploy the state to social engineer faltering communities back into working order by undoing the havoc wrought by capitalism. See Lasch, *The True and only Heaven*, *op. cit.*, pp. 424ff. Blinded by the scientistic glare of an uncritically accepted modernism, they saw themselves as neutral, objective social scientists with direct access to true knowledge — the functional equivalent of Hegel's Absolute Spirit. Consequently, they judged all deviations from their implicitly assumed technocratic Enlightenment model as pathological left-overs from an irrational past (the result of what at the time was described as a "cultural lag"). Not surprisingly, after the resurgence of what they had dismissed as defunct Left ideology within the far from "neutral and objective" social engineering departments of the "Great Society," they felt compelled to politicize their previously "neutral" technocratic ideology, this time as neo-conservatism, to combat the alleged excesses of the New Left, the counterculture and, most importantly, the impact these 1960s movements were having within the Democratic Party. For a survey of their trajectory, see Frank Fischer, *Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise* (Newberry Park CA: Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 144-177. This neo-conservatism remains one of the most violently anti-populist political forces in the US.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Historically, in Europe the Left has tended to hypostatize these "collective sensibilities" into various "humanistic" versions of "normality" as *the* universally proper mode of consciousness whose (pre-revolutionary) poselytization and (post-revolutionary) enforcement were subsequently used to legitimate its "progressive" pretenses.[4] Similarly, in the 20th century the Right, having forsaken all delusions of restoring the *status quo* obtaining prior to the French Revolution, has redefined itself as a reaction against (and a development of) the Left's abstract universalism by identifying these collective sensibilities with "irrational impulses" such as national, ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, etc. traits, whose vindication against "decadence" in general or obliteration in particular has determined its diversified political teleology.[5] In the US, which never had a feudal past and has always thrived on strong democratic traditions, the Left has been able to institutionalize a therapeutic state very slowly, against strong opposition and only under the pretext of responding to major social crises, while the Right, fragmented and, unsure of its identity, has been mostly concerned with defending predominant power relations and a traditional liberal heritage it never really understood.[6] In either

4. See Ferenc Feher, "The Dictatorship over Needs'" in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), pp. 31-42.

5. See Panajotis Kondylis, *Konservatismus: Geschichtlicher Gehalt und Untergang* (Stuttgart: Klett-Kotta, 1986), Part IV, "Die Auflösung des Konservatismus und die Verteilung seines Erbes," pp. 387ff.

6. See Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, revised edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993); and Samuel Francis, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1993). Contrary to Left conventional wisdom, in a society where the legitimacy of exchange relations and property rights has long since ceased to be open for debate — especially after the collapse of communism — bourgeois ideology and the Protestant ethic of the old entrepreneurial capitalists have long ceased to be the predominant conservative orientation. Cf. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976). Bell, however, stops short of acknowledging that the passive hedonism of much of the counterculture resulting from the obliteration of tradition he describes is but the other side of the therapeutic ideology of the managerial elite which, under the pretense of fostering democratic values and equality, seeks to homogenize all in terms of an allegedly universal model of "normality." As another epiphenomenon of the same cultural crisis, his technocratic ideology cannot provide a meaningful alternative. Similarly, standard, primarily cost-driven conservative critiques of this therapeutic state miss the main problem, i.e., the fact that, in reducing citizens to clients, this state undermines the conditions for its own reproducibility, not only on the economic level but, first and foremost, by deactivating the kind of responsible citizens needed, among other things, as control mechanisms to prevent the system from precipitating a rationality crisis unresolvable through the only means available to the state: more of the same formal intervention responsible for the crisis in the first place. See Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," and Tim Luke, "Culture and Politics in the Age of Artificial Negativity," both in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), pp. 43-72.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

case, both versions of New Class ideology have led to what Horkheimer and Adorno described but were never able to fully thematize as the outcome of the "dialectic of enlightenment": "mass deception" resulting from the substitution of one-sided, conceptual representations for multifaceted living practices (the domain of the *doxa*), whose lack of axiological determinacy paved the way for a nihilism legitimating everything and nothing at the same time.[7]

At any rate, when these "wise elites" turn out to be insufficiently wise, as was usually the case whenever they undertook vast projects of social engineering to reconfigure mass consciousness, the results were occasionally problematic and often catastrophic: the liberal democratic welfare state, but also Stalinism, Nazism and fascism. The dynamics conducive to these catastrophic outcomes, however, are inextricably tied to conditions obtaining only in a long gone past, i.e., mostly in countries which have not experienced bourgeois revolutions[8] and far removed from the present *postmodern* context. Today, populism's lingering sinister reputation is primarily a result of the fact that, during the first part of the 20th century, most instances of populist ferment could not be reduced, as they were within modern, liberal democratic systems such as the US, to mere reformist social movements seeking the implementation of particular policies or modification of specific regulations within a socio-political framework implicitly deemed fundamentally sound. Since these populist movements usually took place in predominantly *premodern* contexts lacking institutional mechanisms for smooth orderly changes, rather

7. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), p. 42. While Horkheimer and Adorno never went so far as to vindicate the populist dimension they unwarrantedly saw as terminally mediatized by the very same ideology whose onesidedness could only be overcome through an organic *lebensweltliche* regrounding, they provided a devastating critique of the New Class long before the term became widely used. Unable to transcend the historical context of which they were two of the most penetrating critics, they chose a strategy of "hybernation" — a theoretical retreat into a conceptual impenetrability thawed only occasionally, in Adorno's case (in *Aesthetic Theory*), by the ability of art and philosophy to cut through the ubiquity of mass deception. The existentialist alternative, also popular at the time, was not acceptable, at least to the extent it was predicated on precisely that same ontological meaninglessness ushered in by the Enlightenment. To them, the populist option could not have been a real objective possibility until the end of the Cold War, after the collapse of the totally administered Soviet society demonstrated that, contrary to their dark forebodings about its indefinite extensibility, the dialectic of enlightenment proved itself to be inherently unstable and inevitably doomed to fail. By that time, however, they were all dead.

8. Cf. Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than following often inadequate or altogether non-existent legal procedures they tended to implement presumed necessary measures through readily available authoritarian means. From the viewpoint of New Class rationalism, such processes can only appear *irrational* and easy to identify with social groups not known for their ability to articulate their outlook clearly and coherently. Thus it was all too natural to associate populism with authoritarianism and demagoguery *tout court*, thereby discrediting it outright.[9]

Today, when the *premodern* conditions conducive to these disastrous authoritarian outcomes no longer obtain within most of the industrialized world, the prospects of populism as a viable political alternative may be much brighter than at any time in the past. This is also facilitated by the fact that, with the crisis of modernity, the New Class has entered a phase of delegitimation and decline. As a result, populist *anti-modernism* assumes an altogether different meaning. In the age of *postmodernity*, after the collapse of the concept of progress has undermined all unilinear theories of history and dethroned modernity as the ultimate achievement of civilization, the populist rejection of modernity, hitherto regarded as a sign of backwardness and immaturity, now becomes merely another political choice. It can no longer be reduced to a mere deviation or ignorance-driven recalcitrance to accept an otherwise irresistible and unquestionable modernity. The apodicticity of the latter has long since lost what hitherto had been considered its "obvious" character.

Historically, populist sentiments (understood in the very broad — and perhaps too positive — sense of vindicating democratic self-determination, traditional prerogatives and local autonomy against both capitalist and New Class assaults) become politically decisive during serious crises, when "business as usual" is no longer adequate for the tasks at hand. In predominantly *premodern* contexts (as in Latin America and in parts of Europe during the first half of this century), these crises were generally seen as requiring exceptional measures that could be, and were, deployed

9. In his extensive review of the available literature on populism, Taguieff readily locates the predominant liberal elitist biases. Of the two main varieties of populism he distinguishes, "protest" and "identitary," his focus on the latter — because of the growing political relevance of the National Front in France — tends to distort his analysis of the former. Thus he does not see "protest" populism as a logical extension of a long-standing democratic tradition and its resurgence today as inextricably tied with the systematic marginalization of the citizenry as a result of globalization, centralization and depoliticization of liberal, yet increasingly bureaucratic and centralist, regimes. See Pierre-André Taguieff, "Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem," in this issue of *Telos*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most effectively by extraordinary regimes.[10] In the process, however, the new regimes met considerable internal opposition which, in a context lacking institutionalized mechanisms of conflict mediation and orderly change, often generated violent confrontations. Within such contexts, the eventual repression of the losing side tends to pave the way for the kind of authoritarianism which has discredited *all* varieties of populism, especially since one of the main results of WWII in the West has been the reconfiguration of all states as ordinary welfare states — technocratic New Class versions of populist regimes where democratic deficits are compensated by fiscal irresponsibility. The almost universal institutionalization of liberal democratic regimes, however, did not mean the end of history — an unwarranted generalization of the political paralysis imposed by Cold War imperatives — but only of the logic of modernity. Populism re-emerged with a vengeance once Cold War restraints dissolved and the bankruptcy of modernity became obvious with the potentially terminal fiscal crises of all military-Keynesian regimes.

Beyond Stereotypes

As a not altogether inaccurate, if somewhat simplistic representation, the media depiction of populism as practically every politician's sometimes ideological outlook manages to capture the tragedy of American populism during the last century. Originating as a post-Civil War grassroots movement concerned with vindicating local autonomy and cultural particularity against Northern capitalist and government domination, it never managed to formulate a political program and electoral strategy sufficiently compelling to translate into a viable political coalition. Consequently, it was gradually instrumentalized by turn-of-the-century progressivism

10. This is not a variation of the standard "*Sonderweg*" reading of German history or of the "passive revolution" interpretation of Italian unification, whereby the backwardness of both countries is deployed to explain why they turned to Nazism or fascism. Such an obviously Panglossian and conformist historiography presupposes a "natural" trajectory of *national* development from premodernity to a liberal democratic regime assumed to be the arrival point of any "normal" country. Not only is there nothing intrinsically natural and necessary about either nation-states or liberal democracy, but today both institutions are either obsolete or so crisis-ridden that their persistence much beyond the 20th century is in serious doubt. See Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Emergence of Federal Populism," in *Telos* 89 (Fall 1991), pp. 7-44. One of the paradoxes of the 20th century is that the two world wars have resulted not only in the obliteration of barbaric regimes, but also in the universalization of the liberal-democratic nation-state as the only viable political model, precisely when liberalism was rapidly marginalizing its "democratic" attribute and most hitherto sovereign nation-states were becoming increasingly obsolete and suzerainized by Cold War power politics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and eventually became an integral part of the New Deal coalition within which the original democratic impulse evaporated into the *de facto* benevolent dictatorship of technocratic managers. This problematic historical trajectory helps explain why it is possible and even legitimate not only for practically every new political organization but also for both major American political parties to identify with populism. The Democrats appeal to what populism eventually became[11] after it was instrumentalized by the progressivism of the rising American New Class — a politically legitimate variation of bureaucratic centralism — whereby a powerful redistributive apparatus corrects market-created social imbalances, allegedly in the interests of the "underprivileged" and at the expense of powerful economic interests. For their part, the Republicans generally refer to an earlier notion of populism, predating its subsequent statist involution and emphasizing local autonomy, particularity and differences.[12]

In the case of the Democrats' progressive version of populism, the New Deal's state intervention and social engineering fostered a social homogenization reducing a substantial part of the population to the level of passive state-dependent clients. One of the main unintended consequences has been a significant decline of that individuality without which the system loses its main internal control mechanisms, stagnates and becomes increasingly unable to effectively reproduce itself, eventually precipitating the kind of rationality, motivational and economic crises typical of almost all advanced industrial societies.[13] As for the Republican version, the *proposed* vindication of populism takes the form of dismantling the federal

---

11. This is the kind of populism Kazin longs for, although he finds it too embroiled in a "politically correct" language to be of any use today. See Kazin, *op. cit.*, pp. 282ff. Allegedly, the present task is to sanitize the traditional version of populism and prevent it from deteriorating into the kind of abstract universalism typical of, e.g., Jackson's otherwise eloquent appeal (*op. cit.*, p. 279). However, Kazin, along with most other self-described Left populists, falls into the trap of misreading populism as a domestic variety of Marxism in need of shedding its ethnocentricity without at the same time ceasing to be paradigmatically American. For similar aporias, see Harry C. Boyte and Frank Riessman, eds., *The New Populism: The Politics of Empowerment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); and Harry C. Boyte, Heather Booth and Steve Max, *Citizen Action and the New American Populism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986). For a critique of this approach, see Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism . . . " *op. cit.*, pp. 26-28.

12. Unfortunately, Republicans have tended to deploy this populist rhetoric primarily for opportunistic reasons, while in fact following standard statist redistributive strategies. See David Frum, *Dead Right* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); and Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, *op. cit.* Even the recent federal strategy of distributing bloc grants to states, rather than directly providing services, still retains the federal government's redistributive role.

13. Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism . . . ," *op. cit.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bureaucratic apparatus without simultaneously attempting to generate the conditions which would prevent the creation of problems almost as serious as those to be solved. Within a context characterized by widespread state dependence, the Republican strategy threatens to generate the counterproductive results of increasing existing social inequalities and further marginalizing considerable sectors of the population. It would (as it did in the 1980s, when it was only minimally deployed) strengthen existing relations of domination by privileging a general socio-economic freedom which, under existing conditions, can only be exercised by a few to the detriment of the many. When the competitors are neither equal nor likely to become so in the immediate future, merely levelling the field amounts to intensifying already debilitating social inequalities.[14]

Despite these problems, as a result of the crisis of ungovernability, populism today is increasingly capturing widespread anti-state sentiments both within the traditional Right and what remains of the traditional Left, accelerating the disintegration of entrenched political polarities.[15] But if everyone is tendentially a populist, what does it mean to be *for* or *against* populism? What can the original populism — a 19th century grass-roots movement of mostly dispossessed Southern and Mid-Western farmers — mean today in a postmodern, largely industrial and urban society besieged by radically different problems?

From the viewpoint of opponents of populism, the most familiar negative characterization of the movement remains that provided by "end of ideology social scientists": a mob of "know-nothing" farmers in overalls, brandishing pitchforks, lynching blacks and chasing Jews, immigrants and other "undesirable elements" out of town. Obviously, this is not what today's politicians have in mind when they identify themselves as populists. Rather, the more positive, idyllic self-image of a populist politician is that of a member of a community who does politics (but is not *really* a

14. This is not an argument for remedial measures such as "affirmative action," which end up insuring that the field is never levelled and reifying into a permanent state of inadequacy those who, for whatever reason, cannot compete effectively. One of the most debilitating results is that the alleged beneficiaries of "affirmative action," as a result end up requiring indefinite handicapping. See Hugh Murray, "The Case Against Affirmative Action," in *Telos* 93 (Fall 1992), pp. 145-158; and Paul Piccone, "Artificial Negativity as a Bureaucratic Tool? Reply to Roe," in *Telos* 86 (Winter 1990-91), pp. 127-140. A more viable *populist* approach would be to encourage the constitution or reconstitution of local, autonomous institutional arrangements within whose structured context those who find themselves marginalized can not only function, but also overcome, wherever possible, the conditions of their marginalization.

15. See Lasch, *op. cit.*, chap. 1 "Introduction: The Obsolescence of Left and Right."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

professional politician). Because of his inextricable rootedness in the community, he can cut through the usual alienated modes of interest representation (deemed one-sided, inadequate and therefore tendentially corrupt) to articulate directly needs and desires he experiences in his everyday life along with his constituents. In other words, the populist politician's distinguishing feature is *direct access* to the very same precategorical dimension rationalists and liberals dismiss as "irrational" and, consequently, responsible for most major 20th century authoritarian involutions.

What distinguishes today's supporters from most of the opponents of populism is not so much their different evaluation of the same phenomenon as an altogether different conceptualization of what it actually is. While opponents focus on the xenophobic characteristics of earlier, mostly foreign premodern manifestations of populism, predicated on various combinations of traits such as ethnicity, race, kinship, religion, language etc., defenders have in mind a not yet fully formulated *postmodern* model according to which the *organicity* of the communities constituting the most fundamental political units is a function of adherence to and internalization of collectively shared rules and regulations concerning social behavior, conflict resolution, general expectations, etc.[16] The defining characteristics of that *Verfassungspatriotismus* advocated by Habermas in a disingenuous attempt to relegitimate the nation-state as presumably inhabited by nothing but New Class operatives constantly verbalizing all reality and reaching consensus after careful deliberation, i.e., a commitment to the *fundamental* rules of the game as embodied in a constitutional document, are also what determine the postmodern organicity of the new communities.[17] At the national level, the rules of the game can only be formal, codified and, therefore, incomplete, since they necessarily miss the *lebensweltliche* pre-formal dimension of being, while in

16. This may have to do with the biographies of both supporters and opponents of populism. While supporters tend to be mostly WASPs with no direct acquaintance with anything other than paradigmatically American experiences, opponents such as "end of ideology social scientists" tend to be second or third generation Americans for whom the horrors of various European "populist" manifestations remain important reference points. As these memories recede, however, personal idiosyncrasies are likely to become less relevant and restrict the opponents of populism to hard-line New Class ideologists consciously aware of the privileges and prerogatives at stake in serious populist reforms.

17. See Jürgen Habermas, "Historical Consciousness and Post-Traditional Identity: The Federal Republic's Orientation to the West," in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and tr. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 249-267. See also Dorl Sternberger, *Verfassungspatriotismus* (Frankfurt a/M: Insel Verlag, 1990).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organic communities face-to-face interaction, tradition, custom and other extra-conceptual modes of communication remedy such inadequacy by complementing the merely conceptual. Because of this broader focus on the micro-level and a narrower setting of jurisdictional boundaries, organic communities do not generate the myriads of unintended consequences (such as social disintegration, motivational crises, etc.) resulting from the one-sided character of formal modes of communication and interaction. As with all *living* traditions, the organicity of postmodern communities is also dynamic, constantly reconstituting itself to account for new situations or to incorporate new elements within a subtly shifting configuration of those traditions and customs constituting the preconditions for living practices.[18] Conventional social science folklore[19] dismisses organic communities as defunct by defining them as so closed, self-contained and isolated that it is practically impossible to locate any of them — today or any time in the

18. See the *Telos* "Special Issue on Tradition," No. 94 (Winter 1993-94).

19. Contrary to the dark forebodings of New Class sociologists, modernization has not overwhelmed whatever "organic communities" there ever were in the US. Rather, their survival and continued viability is a function of their ability to resist or otherwise avoid modernizing pressures. In their mid-1950s study of a paradigmatic rural (organic) community, Vidich and Bensman not only projected the imminent obliteration of such communities but, in typical "end of ideology" style, warned about the potential fascist implications of what they saw as "fundamental and perhaps irreversible trends in the very structure of American society." According to the authors, a "populism gone sour could become the source of an antidemocratic, quasi-totalitarian reaction which in spite of its origins in an earlier democratic ideology could turn against the new cultural styles evolving in our society." See Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society: Class Power and Religion in a Rural Community*, revised edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 346-47. Four decades after the study was completed, "Springdale" has yet to succumb to any of these "fundamental . . . irreversible trends." The village still has no fast-food facilities or other obvious signs of irreversible "modernization," and it still runs pretty much the way it did in the 1950s by the direct descendants of those very people Vidich and Bensman ridicule in their "scientific" treatise and, more importantly, by scores of new villagers who have moved in since and who, contrary to dark forebodings of "populist" intolerance, xenophobia and suspicion of outsiders, have become integral members of an ever changing, dynamic organic community. As a result, there is practically no crime in the village, the local government remains one of the most responsible in the state, and the quality of life, if anything, has improved since the study was made. The people have adapted whatever modern technology they have found useful, but social life is still organized by the several local churches. As for "populism," it has yet to go "sour" and there are no signs of creeping fascism anywhere. Direct democracy and face-to-face interaction still characterize local political life and no fundamental changes seem necessary to confront the 21st century — a future for which the village seems to be better prepared than most large American cities. Unlike the Lynds' *Middletown*, ravaged by the impact of a profit-driven industrialism, Springdale has not gone the way of Muncie, Ind. and, in the age of cybernation, it is no longer even threatened by those problems. See Lasch, *op. cit.*, pp. 424ff. for an account of the instrumentalization of the apotheosis of Middletown to buttress New Deal interventionist policies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

past. But organic communities are much more pedestrian than those quaint esoteric entities depicted in modernist fairytales. They did not disappear with the horse and buggy. They thrive wherever people retain a memory of their past and manage their life independently of any intrusive managerial elite seeking to enforce state-mandated "normality" — New Class ideological constructs legitimated by pseudo-universality and "objectivity."

Unlike neo-Kantian *Verfassungspatriotismus*, postmodern populist organicity is neither purely procedural nor exhaustively spelled out in explicit rules and regulations, i.e., relegated to that formal dimension of social reality which, because of its increasing complexity and technicality, becomes the exclusive domain of intellectuals, lawyers and bureaucrats, and eventually the decisive exclusionary mechanism demarcating the New Class in opposition to an increasingly clientized population.[20] It obtains within pluralist communities where differences are not just respected as defining immutable "multicultural" essences fixed once and for all but coexist as living practices gradually blending into a new ethos which constitutes that particular community's evolving cultural specificity.[21] Of course, the inescapable mediation of the ubiquitous culture industry guarantees that these evolving particularities operate within a generally shared cultural horizon allowing for smooth interaction with similarly constituted contiguous communities. These evolving cultural particularities[22] are essential to prevent state-mandated social homogenization from obliterating the personal identity and individuality of those

20. See Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origins, Grammar and Future of Ideology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 64.

21. Once again, the counter-examples of Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Bosnia, etc. immediately frighten scientistic, a-historical modernists into calling for a powerful central state as the guarantor of personal safety and human rights within an otherwise *bellum omnium contra omnes*. As in the previously discussed case of populist authoritarianism, however, all these counter-examples are manifestations of cultural conflicts resulting from ethnic identities unable to transcend their pre-modern limitations. No such problems obtain in postmodern contexts, where ethnicity and territoriality are no longer inextricably connected. Unlike the modernists' "post-traditional" identity, which redescribes the same old bourgeois abstract individualism within the hieroglyphics of "the theory of communicative action," thus recycling all its problems as well, postmodern populist identity remains rooted in the *lebensweltliche* territorial dimension while avoiding the rapidly fading constraints of pre-modern provincialism. For a conformist account of recent efforts to recycle modernist concepts of identity, see Martin Matustik, *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

22. New Class ideology, of course, sees the matter from an entirely different perspective and considers the traditional family the source of "working-class authoritarianism," rather than the cradle of autonomous individuality. See Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, *op. cit.*, pp. 461-463.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who no longer have the privilege of living within the confines of traditional families or their equivalents. In a context where high divorce rates and other factors contribute to the disintegration of family life, there are few other alternatives to state-dependence, passivity and the kind of clientism typical of most American urban communities ravaged by the social engineering of the past six decades. What is essential here is the possibility of reconstituting the kind of individuality whose disintegration the first generation of critical theorists identified as responsible for the rise of 20th century authoritarianism. Because of their direct experiences of fascism and Nazism, however, they could not foresee any remedy through a postmodern populist strategy of deploying strong organic communities as substitutes for the decline of traditional social mechanisms conducive to the constitution of autonomous individuality.[23]

Populist Philosophical Foundations? Dewey as a Populist

Here is where a postmodern version of populism, a movement usually dismissed as anti-intellectual and lacking any systematic theoretical articulation, much less a sophisticated philosophical foundation, connects not only with that paradigmatically American legacy of pragmatism in general and John Dewey in particular — the closest populism has ever come to a

23. Whereas the Frankfurt School originally rushed to the premature conclusion that the culprit was capitalism and its weakening of traditional forms of authority, first and foremost within the family, it would have been more accurate to point to the community disintegration brought about by a prior national integration and homogenization, which subsequently paved the way for the smooth substitution of market relations for traditional ones. See Institut für Sozialforschung, *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Paris: Alcan, 1936). In places such as Japan, where the introduction of market relations did not require the nation-state to implement arbitrarily any sweeping policy of cultural homogenization "*from above*" (because the population had already been *organically* homogenized during the previous centuries), not only were traditional relations left practically intact with hardly any erosion of individuality, but they managed to blend smoothly within a new indigenous form of capitalism contributing considerably to the Japanese post-WWII "economic miracle." Capitalism does tend to flatten all values to the level of mere *exchange* value, precipitating a redistribution of authority and reorganization of power relations according to the logic of the cash nexus, but only within a context pre-homogenized by the nation-state through the prior substitution of a "public sphere" for the informal communal dimension. Such an operation of cultural subversion is usually the work of a modernizing New Class committed to the substitution of formal and abstract discourse (the cultural equivalent of the commodity form: what Gouldner, following Basil Bernstein, called "the elaborate speech code") for the particular context-dependent discourse typical of everyday community life. Both are necessary for effective participation in postmodern society, but without the formative influence of the community's "restricted code" the result is the "authoritarian personality" of the 1930s or the clientized populace of today's welfare state. See Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rigorous theoretical articulation of its fundamental aspirations — but also with the acme of 20th century continental thought: Adorno's critique of identity logic, Husserl's phenomenology and Schmitt's jurisprudence. Although there was never any *direct* relation between the two, in retrospect it is immediately obvious that Dewey's pragmatism and populism have a common origin, a shared tradition and a similar vision. When all is said and done, they turn out to be two sides of the same coin — to the point of succumbing to the same bitter fate. For Dewey, *participatory* democracy was always more than a mere political regime. It was a way of life constitutive of a new personality[24] — a kind of personality impossible to nurture within a society which, unlike the sort of communities deemed terminally obsolete since Tönnies' classical account of the irreversible historical trajectory leading from premodern communities to modern societies, emphasizes only what Gouldner called "the Culture of Critical Discourse,"[25] leaving it to largely unacknowledged residual traditional structures to constitute a viable individuality.[26] Paradoxical as it may appear at first sight, at least to the extent that Schmitt, Adorno and Husserl never had anything to do with American populism nor were they at all familiar with its history, their

---

24. According to Westbrook, "The central political imperative for Dewey was to develop a society that provided the conditions for growth through participation in community life, participation he believed essential to self-realization." See Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 546.

25. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 48ff. Gouldner's penetrating account, however, ends up vitiated by his lingering Weberianism and his obsession with Marxism. By splitting the New Class into "intellectuals" and the "intelligentsia," "old line bureaucrats" and "new staff intelligentsia," etc., he ends up obscuring the main political issues. The postmodern acknowledgment of the inescapable circularity of all discourses, critical or otherwise, renders the "critical" component of New Class ideology Gouldner admired irrelevant and devoid of whatever emancipatory value he, still embroiled in Enlightenment pseudo-universalism, sought to vindicate in it. For a prefiguration of postmodern alternatives, see Renato Parascandalo and Vittorio Hösle, "Three Interviews with Paul K. Feyerabend," in *Telos* 102 (Winter 1995), pp. 115-148.

26. In *The Public and its Problems*, (Athens: The Ohio University Press, 1991), pp. 158-161, Dewey readily admitted that "knowledge is a function of association and communication; it depends upon tradition, upon tools and methods socially transmitted and sanctioned"; and that "habits are formed for the most part under the influence of the customs of a group." This is not a mere afterthought, as he makes clear when he adds: "The influence of habits is decisive because all distinctively human action has to be learned, and the very heart, blood and sinews of learning is creation of habitudes." This grounding of individuality within the concrete community framework was nothing radically new, but the very basis of the predominant 18th century American ethos, responsible for the kind of peculiar political institutions that did develop after the revolution. See Barry Alan Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

works actually address a number of crucial issues which either remained underdeveloped in Dewey's late works or else were summarily short-circuited by his students — a group terminally engaged in the professionalization and scientization of philosophy in the US after WWII, and uninterested in developing a political analysis extending much beyond the immediate concerns of those days: anti-communism and state interventionism.

Adorno's critique of identity logic generalizes Dewey's theory of experience into a socio-political indictment of late modernity impossible to reconcile with its early rationalist objectives; Husserl's analysis of the crisis of European sciences vindicates a teleological dimension which, while animating Dewey's outlook throughout his life, first remained largely buried in his early works and then was eventually forgotten by his students; and Schmitt's reconstruction of the rise and decline of the sovereign state as part and parcel of the *jus publicum Europaeum* provides the concrete historical content to a political philosophy which in Dewey remained rather abstract and, consequently, unable to provide any viable alternative to the cultural hegemony of the technocratic ideology structuring and directing New Deal policies at the time. It is not an accident, therefore, that both in popular consciousness and in academic conventional wisdom, Dewey's legacy never really succeeded in dissociating itself from the predominant ideology of the 1930s and 1940s — no matter how radically different it turns out to be on closer scrutiny. Precisely because of these shortcomings, Adorno, Husserl and Schmitt provide the kind of theoretical refinements that bring out most prominently the true populist character of American pragmatism before it became professionalized into another garden variety of technocratic ideology first and an American home-grown equivalent of French poststructuralism later.[27]

Although "Dewey was the only progressive to survive the 1920s with his democratic faith intact,"[28] toward the end of his life, when he was confronted with the deployment of the New Deal and the threat its social engineering posed to his brand of democracy, his theoretical toolbox proved inadequate to construct a politically viable alternative vision

27. See John Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

28. James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 394. Diggins goes even further in ascribing to Dewey the "hope that the modern state could somehow inculcate citizen participation by invoking older community values once found in face-to-face relations," in *op. cit.*, p. 339. But in Dewey's original model of participatory democracy the state cannot undertake any administrative proselytization, much less "inculcate" anything, without contradicting the fundamental democratic principle of self-determination.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or even to reconstruct the one he had grown up with. Guinlock and other contemporary Deweyans are correct in emphasizing that Dewey is "perhaps the greatest critic of the Enlightenment concept of reason,"[29] but they fail to emphasize the extent to which his commitment to the emancipatory role of social science was not only a throw-back to the kind of idealist claims to absolute truth he otherwise rejected, but also contradicted his constant emphasis on the terminally contextual (i.e., community-based) character of *all* knowledge. It is not surprising, therefore, that half a century after his death social thought in the US is still dominated by the abstract Enlightenment ideology of, e.g., John Rawls and Robert Nozik — paradigmatic antithetical expressions of the kind of welfare state Dewey's instrumentalism should have fought from the very beginning, when it began to assert itself as "social science."[30] Thus his critique of "the naturalistic fallacy," i.e., the confusion of the multifaceted character of natural entities with the necessarily limited conceptual representations meant to apprehend them, was not sufficiently broad to provide the kind of indictment of managerial ideology as, e.g., Adorno's "critique of identity logic,"[31] according to which bureaucratic central

---

29. James Guinlock, "Introduction" to Jo Ann Boydston, ed., *John Dewey. The Later Works, 1925-1953*, Vol. 2 (Carbondale, Il: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. xxiv.

30. Guinlock bemoans this state of affairs, but fails to indicate the extent to which it is a result of Dewey's confused concept of the public, the inability to contextualize it within both a *communitarian* and a *federal* context, and an altogether unwarranted faith in the emancipatory role of that "social science" which already in the 1930s was well on the way to becoming New Class ideology *par excellence*. See Guinlock, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi. For a devastating critique of social science, see Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, *op. cit.* pp. 424ff. For all his penetrating insights, however, Lasch himself remains mesmerized by the same *nationalist* chimera that ultimately led Dewey's original dream of "The Great Community" to deteriorate into another *de facto* garden variety of the welfare state. Consequently, to the extent that he does not remain focused on the local, face-to-face dimension of community interaction (impossible to extrapolate, without translating it into representative democracy, on a national level necessarily under the sway of New Class hegemony), Lasch's populist vision remains a utopian ideal susceptible, as in the past, to "progressive" New Class instrumentalizations.

31. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. by E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973). A politically effective critique of identity logic, however, must vindicate the experiential primacy of that preconceptual dimension Adorno never felt comfortable with since, along with most intellectuals of his generation, he also associated it with irrational impulses and, therefore, Nazi and fascist problematics. This is why his original critique of identity logic needs to be buttressed by the kind of phenomenological foundation he never quite understood. See Enzo Paci, *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*, tr. by Paul Piccone and James E. Hansen (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972); and Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, tr. by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planning turns out to be doomed to failure *in principle*, and to generate innumerable unintended consequences as a result of the inherent inadequacy of the concept (rather than because of poor implementations of the plan, as is usually claimed by practically every inept New Class planner or communist *apparatchik*). Similarly, Dewey's epistemology was never fully integrated with his views concerning the pedagogical function of participatory democracy. Consequently, he never succeeded in identifying the social conditions conducive to the constitution of a *concrete* public of autonomous individuals interacting on more than merely the abstract conceptual level privileged by New Class intellectuals. Here is where Husserl's *Lebenswelt* as a precategorical dimension essential for the transmission of what is not or cannot be captured by the concept alone and, consequently, the vindication of the primacy of the micrological context for the constitution of a democratic personality helps formulate a critique of the *mass* democracy ushered in by the New Deal as fundamentally undemocratic and as an exercise in demagoguery — even though Dewey's constant emphasis on the experiential dimension sought to privilege precisely the primacy of communal life. Thus Dewey never developed a satisfactory analysis of how the preconditions for democratic participation (such as autonomous individuality) were being eroded by bureaucratization, centralization, the professionalization of politics and the resulting exclusion of the overwhelming majority of the people increasingly incapable of engaging in that particular type of discourse.[32] Last, but not least, his concept of politics in general and the state in particular were never historicized, contextualized or deconstructed as, e.g., in Schmitt's trenchant critique of Hans Kelsen and the reconstruction of the trajectory of the *jus publicum Europaeum*, to generate a substantive analysis of the statist subversion of the US Constitution taking place under his very eyes through a series of subtle Supreme Court decisions reinterpreting the meaning of the 10th and 14th amendments.

---

32. Although Dewey was well aware of the dangers of the development of a ruling intellectual aristocracy, he assumed that democratic control would prevent that and keep experts and professionals within the framework of a democratic society predicated on the primacy of community. He never tired of pointing out that "The Great Society created by steam and electricity may be a society, but is no community." Dewey, *op. cit.* p. 98. Since he died long before the debilitating impact of the welfare state in clientizing the beneficiaries of its services became obvious, he did not confront the problem of the New Class mediatizing democratic consensus and therefore turning the democratic process into an exercise in the legitimation of New Class domination. *Ibid.*, pp. 208ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

While he never forgot the Jeffersonian ideals of his youth,[33] nor that small self-governing communities were "the heart of his philosophy of politics," there is hardly a word in Dewey's voluminous writings about the specific historical motives behind the original model of American self-government and federalism as radical alternatives to either the nation-state or the centralized mega-states developing at the time.[34] Although the growing problems of a capitalist economy, the rise of fascism and communism, and the gradual involution of liberalism into a technocratic, managerial ideology did not provide the best context within which to recycle Jeffersonianism *sic et nunc* in the heyday of Fordism, there were other dissenting voices[35] and potentially retrievable models he could have appropriated, even if they were associated with the conservative mind-set of people such as the Southern Agrarians, still engaged in fighting long lost battles or trying to hang on to a past that could only survive by reconstituting itself as the future.

---

33. It is not mere coincidence that as late as 1939 Dewey edited a volume of Jefferson's writings. See Westbrook, *op. cit.* pp. 454-55.

34. In tracing the development of American political institutions, Dewey does not realize that his insistence on the primacy of community and of the face-to-face interaction that characterizes it requires the kind of jurisdictional autonomy impossible within "the Great Community" he hoped the US would become. Consequently, he saw federalism as essentially another version of the nation-state. See Dewey, *op. cit.*, pp. 112ff., 225, and Chapter V "Search for the Great Community," pp. 143-184. He assumed that such a community "will have its consummation when free inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication." To the extent that this type of communication is restricted to that "culture of critical discourse" beyond the reach of most ordinary people thereby excluded from democratic participation, it subverts the possibility of realizing precisely that democratic ideal Dewey thought it would.

35. While the Southern Agrarians in the 1930s shared Dewey's enthusiasm for some version of Jeffersonianism and advocated a robust criticism of the burgeoning welfare state from a regionalist perspective — a criticism which today sounds a lot more relevant than Dewey's own modulated reservations — there was never a possibility of conceptual cross-fertilization. Not only were the Southern Agrarians terminally *premodern* and embroiled with some of the more questionable features of "the traditional Southern way of life" (something anathema to Dewey), but they could never have bought into Dewey's fascination with science, experimentation and, most of all, his profound democratic creed. Paradoxically, insightful as the Southern Agrarians' critique might have been, it was precisely this set of values which prevented Dewey from taking that critique seriously. The Southern Agrarians' insistence on *local* autonomy could have provided some theoretical muscle to Dewey's unresolved thematization of the welfare state and New Class centralization. In the few references in his works to the Southern doctrine of state's rights and local autonomy, Dewey ridicules it as provincial and often *de facto* self-contradictory. See Dewey, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133. For a typical Southern Agrarian critique, see Donald Davidson, *Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States: The Attack on Leviathan*, with a new introduction by Russell Kirk (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As a result, Dewey's heritage suffered exactly the same fate as populism. As the latter faded into progressivism, his philosophy ended up forgotten or distorted into merely another variant of the predominant scientistic ideology throughout the leaden years of the Cold War. As one of his more perceptive biographers put it, already by the end of WWII "both among philosophers and in the larger society, he had become a figure widely honored and broadly ignored."[36] Even his more successful "heir," Richard Rorty, has little in common with Dewey's concerns for participatory democracy, meaningful education and a concept of citizenship constitutive of a new personality type. As has been pointed out, "Rorty wanted to see America choose tradition rather than moral law, the conventions of an ongoing community rather than the general principles of a static theory."[37] Yet the traditions his philosophy articulate are not organically grounded anywhere other than in Rorty's own professional community and are predicated on the kind of opportunism, irresponsibility and shifting conformism typical of *fin-de-siècle* academia.[38] With the end of the Cold War and the growing legitimation deficit of the central government, however, Dewey's political philosophy becomes increasingly relevant, along with that postmodern populism which, when all is said and done, should have been its *realpolitische* otherness all along.

The reasons for this state of affairs are not difficult to fathom. While Dewey's philosophy has from the very beginning been associated by its critics with opportunism, mere problem-solving and a distrust of all received views, it was actually deeply rooted in that same *traditional* American framework that gave rise to populism. With the development of industrialism, the closing of the Western frontier, the assimilation of a heterogeneous lot of predominantly East and South European immigrants and the gradual rise of the US to a world power, the original organic bonds between the WASP polity and the federal institutional forms it had generated could no longer be maintained. What displaced them after the Civil War resulted in the obliteration of the last main premodern obstacle, Southern particularism, thus paving the way for the construction of a homogenizing nation-state predicated on a modernist and progressive framework allegedly free of all theological and axiological foundations.[39]

---

36. Westbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 532.
37. Diggins, *op. cit.*, p. 452.
38. Westbrook seconds widespread evaluations of Rorty's neo-pragmatism as a "cultural criticism that flies entirely by the seat of its pants." See Westbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 540.
39. See Richard Bensel, *Yankee Leviethan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This type of totalizing political organization gradually eroded previous informal internal control mechanisms, resulting in the long series of social dislocations culminating in the Great Depression and a new mediational institution (an all-powerful interventionist federal government) meant to substitute for the long gone organic bonds. Such a culture not only marginalized local community infrastructure indispensable for the kind of *Bildung* Dewey considered an indispensable component of democracy, but generated a society polarized into governing elites and a broader polity for whom democracy was reduced to "a measure of influence without any direct participation in policy making and usually without even any direct communication with policy makers."[40] This mass society, however, had little in common with the original model of American democracy, least of all with the democratic ethos Dewey strove to vindicate. Thus, in many respects, Dewey's and the populists' democratic ideals were already becoming a memory when they were first articulated and did not have much of a chance to become reinstitutionalized unless the conditions responsible for their obsolescence did not themselves become obsolete with the decline of modernity and Fordism. The advent of postmodernity and post-Fordism may have created those new social conditions conducive to the revitalization of Deweyan and populist ideals — ideals which can no longer be relegated to 19th century nostalgia by appealing to discredited theories of progress.

Toward the end of his life, Dewey became too embroiled with the predominant modernist assumptions of his day to be interested in reinventing a capitalism different from the rapacious corporate variety that had developed by the 1920s and 1930s — one based on the populist ideal of small entrepreneurship, hard work and personal responsibility (although such an ideal was certainly in tune both with his New England background and his Protestant upbringing). Thus, despite the fact he initially privileged participatory democratic communities as prior to a central state seen basically as a mediating agency, and despite his life-long admiration for Jefferson's political philosophy, in the wake of the Great Depression he did unwittingly succumb to the sirens of technocracy and scientism. This was in no small part due to his undifferentiated concept of an amorphous public totalized by the new modes of communication and interaction. Dewey had too much faith in the emancipatory role of the social sciences, deemed objective and neutral, to inquire into the extent to which such sciences

40. Westbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 544. See also Klappenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were well on the way to becoming the far-from-neutral arm of the developing New Deal bureaucratic apparatus needed to mediatize what is still referred to as "informed publics" or "the public sphere."[41] Generalized to the *national* level, the mediatized public loses whatever pedagogical role it may have played when limited to communities characterized by the primacy of face-to-face interaction. There is no attempt in Dewey to thematize the primacy of a community-based public within a broader context by inquiring into new federal modes of governance — something already prefigured in the Jeffersonian model he greatly admired. Consequently, public discourse evaporates into the ethereal domain of technocratic management and not only loses its original emancipatory function but becomes a new sophisticated tool of legitimation for hegemonic New Class elites. To the extent that access to the kind of abstract critical discourse facilitated by the new communication technology turned out to be restricted primarily to these New Class elites, his fascination with science led him unavoidably to prefigure an idiosyncratic version of the predominant technocratic ideology. In times of crisis, he saw the common good as served best by an interventionist state able to deploy whatever measures the situation demands.[42] It is not surprising that his views, notwithstanding lame attempts to distinguish between (democratic) *planning* and the (bureaucratic) *planned*, fed into and became identified with, rather than constituting an alternative to, technocratic New Deal liberalism and the predominant progressivism. While a postmodern populism shares the spirit and thrust of Dewey's philosophy, it also needs a considerably more articulate political theory able to thematize the social roots of the new conflicts dividing the public into populists and New Class agents in order to prefigure the kind of institutional framework necessary to guarantee the permanence of participatory democratic practices.

Populist Geopolitics? Schmitt and Populism

A more elaborate *political* theory must begin by historicizing the

41. Although in the lectures he delivered in China he advocated a traditionally American concept of the state as a minimalist institution meant to facilitate interaction among a variety of social groups, Dewey eventually broadened his position to accommodate social engineering. Confronted with the need to contain the havoc wrought by capitalism (i.e., the Depression), he grudgingly gravitated to a more interventionist concept — notwithstanding the fact that he was always adamantly opposed to state capitalism and any form of authoritarian socialism. For Dewey's early views, see Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-chen, eds., *John Dewey: Lectures in China, 1919-1920* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1973).

42. See Westbrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 305ff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sovereign state as a particular historical formation within a specific geographical context. According to Schmitt, this state was the highest achievement of Western rationalism and the main agency of secularization in Europe. It also was the foundation of that *jus publicum Europaeum* codified in international law at least until challenged by the Monroe Doctrine and the US rise as a continental power.[43] By the end of the 19th century, when the US had grown into a major world power, the sovereign European state was already in decline. The end of the epoch it defined was delayed by the advent of communism and eventually the Cold War. In spite of the creation of the UN, the resulting post-WWII bipolar world system further contributed to the weakening of state sovereignty, but also helped to perpetuate the fiction of the state as the fundamental political unit. Only after the disappearance of the Soviet Union did it become obvious that the state had lost (or was in the process of rapidly losing) its legitimacy. Despite all the recent speculations about various potential "New World Orders," no such system has developed, nor has any new political form yet effectively challenged the moribund traditional sovereign state.

Already in the late 1930s, Schmitt theorized the development of a new world order as a global cluster of regional political formations (*Grossräume*) predicated on the hegemony of a major power over a plethora of surrounding states[44] — something not altogether different from the system of "spheres of influence" which developed after the WWII. This scenario, however, is not the *only* one Schmitt provides. His focus on geopolitical *Realpolitik* was a special instance of his constant emphasis on what particular interests were hidden behind ideological mystifications as well as their historical trajectory. This is why he was so critical of liberalism and that pseudo-universalism deployed by Enlightenment ideologues in the 18th century to justify the homogenizing role of the Jacobin state and French expansionist ambitions. Unlike the Marxist critique of the bourgeois domination ushered in by the French Revolution, Schmitt's own analysis did not theorize the remedy for bourgeois pseudo-universality in terms of the advent of genuine universality through an extension of political rationalization in the economic sphere. Rather, through a critique much more radical than the Marxist and free of unwarranted teleological baggage such as the Enlightenment theory of

43. See G.L. Ulmen, "American Imperialism and International Law: Carl Schmitt on the US in World Affairs," in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987).

44. Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkersrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950), second edition (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

progress, he traced the foundations of political organization not to the abstract ideals of "*liberté, egalité et fraternité*" but to concrete social forms (Hegel's objective spirit) constituting social consciousness.[45]

The kernel of Schmitt's critique of the French Revolution in particular and, *ipso facto*, of liberal-democratic regimes in general is that, notwithstanding their revolutionary pretenses, revolutionary political regimes can ultimately legitimate their radical break with the existing order only by going back to deeper roots, i.e., by appealing to hidden or forgotten higher mandates, either corrupted or betrayed by the particular orders the revolution seeks to displace. This is why one of the main concerns of Schmitt's jurisprudence became to show the extent to which any new order is necessarily parasitic on the existing one in particular and the tradition in general. In 1934, in what probably constitutes an attempt to implicitly apply this approach to what he mistakenly hoped the newly-established Nazi regime would become, Schmitt was more explicit in demonstrating how, of the three main types of juridical thought — normativism, decisionism and *Ordnungsdenken* — *Ordnungsdenken* is the most fundamental of the three since it is presupposed by the other two. The same applies to political regimes, since according to Schmitt, they are ultimately isomorphic with and objective extensions of juridical systems.[46] In other words, institutions, traditions and customs are ultimately the inescapable reference points for all types of juridical systems and political regimes. Consequently, what remains decisive, even during the most revolutionary transformations, is

45. The young Marx of the 1844 *Manuscripts* did not fall into the vulgar materialist trap of postulating "consciousness" as a function of "being," the standard Diamat position, but qualified both terms, respectively as "*social* being" and "*social* consciousness." Consequently, Marx's own material base is already Hegel's "objective spirit" rather than a vacuous and meaningless "being as such," which could be dynamicized by subsequent vulgar Marxists only by interjecting illegitimate enthymemes such as secularized equivalents of Christian eschatology. In this sense, the young Marx is much closer to Schmitt's *Ordnungsdenken* than to orthodox Marxism or even to some of his later writings where the economistic logic seems to determine political developments.

46. See Carl Schmitt, *Über die drei Arten des rechtswissenschaftlichen Denkens* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsansalt, 1934). According to Portinato: "While for many years Carl Schmitt's name has remained tied to the fortunes or misfortunes of decisionism, such a doctrinal elaboration does not constitute his last word on the subject. Aware of the difficulty and the limitations of such a doctrine, in the 1930s he broached the doctrine of the institution in order to end up later with the theory of *nomos*, while never rejecting his earlier positions. Thus in *Über die drei Arten des rechtswissenschaftlichen Denkens* his recourse to the concept of concrete ordering already sought to integrate decisionism, inadequate from the viewpoint of a theory of ordering, not any less than the normativism of which it constituted the radical reversal and the polemical antithesis." See Pier Paolo Portinato, *La Crisi dello Jus Publicum Europaeum: Saggio su Carl Schmitt* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1982), p. 93.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

precisely that *particular concrete traditional dimension* which in the US has historically been vindicated by populism, against opportunistic departures motivated primarily by the super-legal objectives of the moment.[47] Within such a framework, populism turns out to be potentially grounded on a very rich and long-standing theoretical tradition. Unfortunately, within a context characterized by New Class cultural hegemony and a dearth of serious populist intellectuals, this wealth so far has remained hidden and unexamined.

Ultimately, all revolutions legitimate themselves by recourse to an older order, reconstituted in terms of present needs and regarded as more legitimate than the present one they seek to overthrow. Thus the French Revolution sought to legitimate itself by appealing to the inalienable rights of man, the Russian one to inevitable progress, National Socialism to racial purity and fascism to an unfulfilled national unity. None of these *ideologies*, however, were actually based on *concrete orders* embodying the spacio-temporal particularity of the people they pretended to totalize into a political unit, but rather, on mere *normative* frameworks, i.e., abstract constructs created by various groups of New Class ideologists meant to legitimate new *modernist* relations of domination.[48] Consequently, while pretending to represent particular populist sensibilities,[49] they all ended up

47. For a critical discussion of "super-legality," see Paul Piccone and Gary Ulmen, "Schmitt's 'Testament' and the Future of Europe," in *Telos* 83 (Spring 1990), pp. 3-34.

48. As Schmitt put it, "the subjugation of the state to ethical norms means nothing other than the control and domination of certain men and social groups which, in fact, achieve control of the state in the name of ethical norms they have made valid." Carl Schmitt, "Staatethik und pluralistischer Staat," in *Positionen und Begriff im Kampf Weimar-Genf-Varsailles, 1923-1939* (Hamburg: Haseatische Verlagtanstalt, 1940), p. 144. Far from appealing to any *concrete* traditional orders, such as those obtaining in Bavaria or Prussia, Nazism resorted to a mixture of myth and modernism, thus betraying its fundamental New Class character. See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Similarly, Italian fascism did not pay any attention to the particular concrete orders of the various Italian regions but sought to homogenize them all by appealing to the long defunct legacy of the Roman Empire — a legacy which, because of the lingering influence of Roman law, may apply to European rather than merely Italian identity.

49. As Miglio has indicated, under mostly Marxist (and, therefore, paradigmatically New Class) influences, the history of the last couple of centuries has been interpreted primarily in terms of the logic of *capitalist* expansion, ignoring altogether a parallel and even more important mode of domination articulated through *political* power relations. The latter have been institutionalized through the development of nation-states originally deployed to reestablish order during the religious civil wars in the 17th century but later, after the French Revolution, to redefine concrete traditional orders of particular peoples in terms of the abstract Enlightenment ideology of the rising New Class. See Gianfranco Miglio, *Una Costituzione per i Prossimi Trent'Anni. Intervista sulla Terza Republica*, ed. by Marcello Staglieno (Bari: Laterza, 1990); and "Toward a Federal Italy," in *Telos* 90 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 19-42.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instrumentalizing them within their own *nationalist* programs of indiscriminately homogenizing a plethora of particular peoples into "nations."

No longer able to derive its legitimation by traditional means, the nation-state had to find recourse to formal ones such as legality, but also nationalism, solidarity, etc. The latter could only go so far: ultimately the only effective mode of legitimation was the guarantee of collective well-being through the development of expansive and wasteful welfare states financed largely through deficit spending justified by emergency predicaments such as the Great Depression and the Cold War. Thus the end of the Cold War not only means the dissolution of the two blocs, but also the exhaustion of whatever remains of the legitimating mechanisms of sovereign nation-states, now too small to deal with the debilitating impact of economic and cultural globalization and too large to handle growing domestic problems. Populism and federalism resurface at this juncture as concrete alternatives to domestic disintegration and international chaos. This is the predicament which has led to the projection of European unification and increasing calls for decentralization, regionalization and localization within the particular nations engaged in the still ambiguous and confused undertaking.

It is also the predicament of the US, where the original federal and populist foundations have been eroded by two centuries of nation-building — an erosion resulting from unresolved contradictions built in the very constitutional framework.[50] The American Revolution began with a Declaration of Independence predicated on the same universal human rights as its French counterpart later on (something that never found its way into the subsequent Constitution), but ultimately concerned, first and foremost, with the sovereignty and axiological heterogeneity of the particular states coming together as a federation. This conflictual legitimating foundation, implicit in

50. Contrary to nationalist neo-conservative arguments, such as those of, e.g., Samuel H. Beer, to the effect that the federation is *prior* to the states and only subsequently legitimates them as relatively autonomous units, the states constitute the fundamental units legitimating and empowering the federation — even if some states came into being as a result of federal efforts. The structure of the Constitution is such that the states cannot be coherently degraded, as has happened since, to the level of mere administrative units of an otherwise unitary central government. See Samuel H. Beer, *To Make a Nation: the Rediscovery of American Federalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). The oxymoronic title already betrays the main thesis.Theoretical sloppiness about fundamental concepts such as "nation" and "federation" occludes the conformist intent to legitimate the involution of the federal system into a *de facto* national one. The unitary character of the nation is incompatible with the heterogeneity of the federation. Turning a federation into a nation requires substantial constitutional modifications, which cannot (and should not) be smuggled in, as has happened in the US, through the hermeneutical legendermain of various "activist" Supreme Courts and the questionable legitimating historiography of apologetic academics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the motto "*e pluribus unum,*" was initially resolved with the Civil War in favor of the "*unum*" without, however, ever entirely vanquishing the "*pluribus.*" The latter captures and provides the proper institutional framework for the particular participatory character of American democracy much more than the former, derived directly from 18th century Enlightenment universalism and originally deployed primarily to protect the country from the lingering threats of European powers and to facilitate internal development.

Because of historically specific reasons having to do mostly with the political system's relative openness and the lack of an oppressive past, American populism always felt at ease within the general constitutional framework — unlike other *premodern* countries, such as Russia, where precisely the opposite was the case and the predominant authoritarian context accounts for the equally authoritarian and violent character of the kind of native populism that developed there during the latter part of the 19th century.[51] Consequently, American populism was always *reformist*. Whatever authoritarianism there was within its ranks was primarily a matter of personal idiosyncrasies. In most *modern* and *postmodern* contexts,[52] where democratic traditions and parliamentary systems are well established there are usually sufficient institutional means to resolve internal conflicts and, consequently, contain any transition — even those hitherto regarded as "revolutionary" — within the confines of strict legality (that was what happened with Nazism, and was also the main premise of the Eurocommunist strategy deployed in the 1970s).

While the roots of American populism can be readily traced to the

---

51. See Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution. A History of the Populist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia* (London: Weinfeld and Nicholson, 1960). See also Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism . . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 23n.

52. As Schmitt emphasized in the very last article he wrote, the contemporary structure of the liberal democratic state renders unnecessary the kind of extra-legal politics historically associated with both Right and Left manifestations of the populist phenomenon. In fact, he saw this openness as a potential problem, which he thought ought to be remedied with the deployment of "super-legality" (provisions making it difficult to alter fundamental constitutional rules similar to those already built in the US Constitution). See Carl Schmitt, "The Legal World Revolution," in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 73-89. While aimed specifically at Eurocommunist strategies to gain power through electoral means, this is the very same argument Schmitt had deployed in the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, from the very inception of the Weimar Constitution — a constitution he was not particularly fond of — Schmitt emphasized the centrality of Article 48 empowering the Chancellor to prevent a too facile revolutionary alteration of the constitutional order. See Carl Schmitt, *Der Hüter der Verfassung*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1969).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

18th century, to the pre-revolutionary colonial experience, Protestant theology and the vindication of religious particularity, a roughly similar process can be located in European history. The different socio-historical context within which it came into being, however, resulted in rather different political manifestations and different misinterpretations by New Class historiography. Ironically, Schmitt himself, never a populist in any sense of the word, also provides the basis for a reconstruction of the dynamics of the figure of the "populist" in terms of the historical trajectory of its prototype, "the partisan." In documenting the trajectory of this usually unexamined political figure, he traces the concept of the "partisan" back to the Spanish and Prussian anti-Napoleonic struggles of 1808-1813, culminating in the Spanish *Reglamento de Partidas y Cuadrillas* of December 28, 1808 and the Prussian *Landstrum* of April 21, 1813.[53] Contrary to Left conventional wisdom that identifies the partisan *sic et nunc* with the anti-fascist resistance during the closing phases of WWII, the original partisans were engaged in defending their particular communities against the abstract universalism of an Enlightenment imposed throughout Europe by Napoleon and French imperialism — the same sort of abstract universalism subsequently upgraded and recycled by the communists in a new world-historical struggle for "human emancipation," i.e., the homogenization of all particularity and difference under the stewardship of enlightened party intellectuals.

In the 20th century, however, the partisans were successfully instrumentalized by Leninism as the shock-troops of precisely that universalism the original partisans had fought against. Communist partisans presented themselves as the defenders of their homes and families against foreign invaders or colonial occupation, but they no longer fought for the particularity, specificity and otherness of their communities but for universal goals articulated by the local branch of the Communist Party. As Julian Freund has indicated, the partisan struggling for the universalistic goals of communism is not really a "partisan" but a "guerrilla,"[54] and the preconditions for his existence are strictly limited to the history of world communism (1917-1989). At that point, however, "politics . . . centers on [abstract] values and no longer on the definable

53. Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen. Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1970).

54. Cf. Julian Freund, *Utopie et Violence* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1978). Cf. also Gary Ulmen, "Reflections of a Partisan: Julien Freund (1921-1993)," in *Telos* 102 (Winter 1995), pp. 3-10.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interests of established communities."[55]

Schmitt, of course, was primarily concerned with the changing character of war, when the concept of the "enemy" typical of the *jus publicum Europaeum* became displaced by the "foe"[56] of total war, thus paving the way for wars of extermination and the kind of barbarity typical of the 20th century.[57] His emphasis on the partisan as an irregular combattant was primarily meant to exemplify the extent to which the distinction between war and peace had become blurred in a political setting he feared would gradually deteriorate into a universal civil war. Yet he continued to vindicate the "telluric" character of the partisan, his commitment to the particularity of his community, its traditions and customs. Similarly, while not altogether sure about what form the new *nomos* of the earth would take,[58] in the closing page of his book he hints at the possibility of "unexpected forms of a new partisan" as the political figure of the future.

Schmitt never went as far as to identify this "new partisan" with "the postmodern populist." He was too concerned with the communists' instrumentalization of the partisan as an irregular fighter in a global confronta-

55. See Paul Gottfried, *Carl Schmitt: Politics and Theory* (New York: Greenwood, 1990), p. 89. Gottfried, however, is unable to see any alternatives to the state and, consequently, sees its erosion as a symptom of decadence and decline. He remains too tied to a unilinear theory of history to envision the possibility of qualitatively new modes of political organization beyond the nation-state. Consequently, he ends up dismissing the partisan-turned-guerrilla as irreversibly corrupted by the Marxist instrumentalization and cannot envision any possible retrival of the original particularity and "telluric character" constituting its original *raison d'être.*

56. See G. L. Ulmen, "Return of the Foe," and George Schwab, "Enemy or Foe: A Conflict of Modern Politics," both in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 187-193 and 194-201.

57. Interestingly enough, Dewey was also bothered by this transformation and actually complained that the Great War and "the dynastic conflicts of the seventeenth century" are both called "wars." See Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

58. Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen*, *op. cit.* Already in 1951, in *La Unidad del Mundo* (Madrid: Ateneo, 1951), Schmitt speculated as to the kind of "New World Order" which may follow the Cold War and argued against the possibility of a unified world. At that time he spoke of "a new plurality," but one which he feared would be "frought with catastrophies." Ten years later, however, he was already envisioning more positive possibilities — projections increasingly closer to the populist vision that eventually transpires in *Theorie des Partisanen*. In discussing the kind of *Grossräume* that would develop following the end of the Cold War, as well as the type of peoples constituting them, he wrote: "It will become clear then which nations and which peoples will have had sufficient strength to maintain themselves through industrial development and be faithful to themselves . . . It will be clear then that the new spaces receive a content not only from technology, but also from the spiritual substance of the men who collaborate in their development, from their religion and their race, from their culture, their language and from the living force of their national heritage." See Carl Schmitt, *El Orden del Mundo Depués de la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Politicos, 1962).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion between two implacably opposed *Grossräume* to realize the extent to which this instrumentalization was inherently unstable and had already become obsolete by the 1950s.[59] The identification of the *particular* objectives of "national liberation movements" with the *universalization* of the communist system could make sense only within the context of the world revolution the USSR had *de facto* already postponed indefinitely with Stalin's strategy of "socialism in one country" and *de jure* repudiated at the end of WWII with the abolition of the Comintern. The Yugoslav defection from the communist camp and the beginning of the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s had already resulted in a deterioration of relations between the Soviet Union, still presenting itself as the universal agent of world communism, and the various liberation movements allegedly furthering the cause in their particular national contexts. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the USSR merely instrumentalized these movements to further its otherwise rather particularistic geopolitical objectives, while the various liberation movements mostly reciprocated by paying lip service to communist ideology in order to receive economic and military assistance in overthrowing established local power structures.

Schmitt saw the partisan as part of a *premodern* reaction against the French revolution and its imperialist Enlightenment ideology, defending particularity against an extraneous homogenizing universality. In a *modernist* context identifying particularity and universality *tout court,* the partisan turned into the guerrilla seeking to defend particularity by fighting for universality. With the advent of postmodernity, the figure of the partisan evolves once again into the new populist concerned with vindicating his own particularity against the clientizing and marginalizing pseudo-universality of the New Class, now identified in the US with the "federal" government. Confused and misguided as they may be, the various local

59. To the extent that he was concerned primarily with European history, Schmitt overlooked the fact that his figure of the "modern" partisan can be traced beyond the anti-Napoleonic and anti-Enlightenment struggles of the early 19th century. The first modern partisans were actually the minutemen of the American Revolution. Unlike their later European counterparts, they were not struggling merely for local autonomy, tradition and customs, i.e., for a pre-modern *status quo ante*, against what later came to be called "modernity." Rather, they sought the political equivalent of the objectification of a Protestant ethos which, although pretending to vindicate that authentic Christianity obtaining prior to its corruption by the Catholic Church, prefigured the development of a new society unencumbered by European domination. Thus, unlike their European counterparts later on, they were under no pressure to reconstitute their communities as political organizations structurally isomorphic with the nascent French *nation-state* they opposed, which explains why they were free to develop a *federal* system more adequate to safeguard their particularity and otherness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

militia and separatist movements springing up throughout the US in reaction to a central government perceived as intrusive, foreign and tendentially totalitarian are pathological symptoms of the new postmodern political predicament. Similarly, the various regionalist and secessionist movements springing up throughout Europe and seeking to bypass the nation in favor of a more autonomous relation with a united Europe, are part of the same general crisis of ungovernability resulting from legalitarianism and motorized legislation — the inevitable outcome of the pretense of formalizing and codifying all social practices in a heterogeneous context no longer characterized by shared mores and traditional modes of interaction. This Enlightenment *hubris* of pretending to be able to capture in thought and regulate all that obtains in life gives rise to an unending stream of legislation which eventually renders the system a lawyers' heaven and everyone else's hell. The tendency is for the system to become caught in a vicious system whereby the more legislation is passed the more unwieldy the system becomes.[60] The unintended consequence of this rationality deficit is the deployment of ever greater amounts of *corruption* necessary to cut through the red tape as compensatory mechanisms, thus triggering even more legislation and regulation to contain it,[61] gradually delegitimating not only the legal system but also the liberal democratic framework of which it is an inextricable part.

The phenomenon of the Leagues in Italy, the various secessionist movements throughout Europe, the attempt to vindicate the 10th Amendment to the US Constitution against recent interpretations of the 14th, the

---

60. This Enlightenment tradition is what generated the legal positivism of the 19th century, eventually resulting in the liberal regimes' "legalitarianism" and the kind of "motorized legislation" Schmitt indicted as threatening the eventual disintegration of the legal system. See Carl Schmitt, "The Plight of European Jurisprudence," in *Telos* 83 (Spring 1990), pp. 35-70. The juridical "normativism" typical of New Class rule, however, is self-destructive, leading eventually to a crisis of ungovernability and, therefore, reconstruction of the institutional framework along more manageable lines. Today's confrontation between a populism not yet fully aware of its identity and heritage, and the still hegemonic New Class, is not only the most recent manifestation of what Schmitt described as the conflict between "normativism" and *Ordnungsdenken*, but also a not yet systematically articulated call for institutional alternatives to the increasingly ungovernable framework.

61. For a discussion of the dynamics of administration, see Emery M. Roe, "Critical Theory, Sustainable Development and Populism," in this issue of *Telos*; and *Narrative Policy Analysis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994). While Roe's analysis accurately captures the quandaries of administrative rationality, he tends to frame his account in terms of a cyclic process, which provides the misleading impression that the process takes place within an overall stable context and can go on indefinitely.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

US government's new strategy to devolve entitlements (still mystified as part of "human rights") to the states in the form of "bloc grants," the growing interest in "subsidiarity," the Waco affair and the Oklahoma bombing in the US, etc. are all in some sense symptoms of and reactions against this predicament: they all testify to the failure of the New Class to formalize all within a smoothly functioning technocratic apparatus. This is why it is imperative to vindicate the Deweyan legacy within a theoretical context broader than the one he himself provided in order to prefigure a viable strategy to decentralize the federal government, disempower the New Class, and thus vindicate those ideals which in the US are inextricably bound with traditional American identity and throughout most of the world thrive as part of the broader Western heritage.

Democracy vs. Liberalism

The crisis of representative democracy exemplifies the extent to which attempts to solve it by reinvigorating an abstract "public" constituting a national public sphere are doomed to fail, as Dewey's efforts to develop an alternative to the predominant technocratic model in the 1930s in fact did. A populist analysis of this crisis helps explain why it is possible for a "democracy" to have representative institutions such as political parties, voluntary associations, lobbies, etc., and fail – to the point that it becomes necessary for "populist" politicians to attempt to bypass these institutions altogether in order to re-establish that link between rulers and ruled without which "democracy" is meaningless. Impossible to ground in that traditionally democratic face-to-face communication where it is not merely a matter of transmitting conceptually pre-packaged information but of constituting intersubjectivity and social being (i.e., making-something-common), the kind of impoverished political representation provided by representative democracy falls victim to the same unequal exchange which, as Adorno showed, precipitates class divisions and massive social inequalities. Ultimately, when the masses, disenfranchised by this subtle system of political exclusion, are no longer capable of participating in the political process, their withdrawal threatens the vitality of representative democracy itself and facilitates corruption, inefficiency and waste. At any rate, it is a perversion of democratic ideals to continue characterizing as "democratic" a formal electoral process where only a minority of the population bothers to vote in contests where the choices are usually indistinguishable and administratively constituted by political machines, particular economic interests, etc.

For these reasons and others, the dialectic of enlightenment (whereby

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enlightenment gradually loses its concrete grounding in the *Lebenswelt* and reverts into precisely the superstition and myth it sought to eliminate) extends to the logic of representative democracy.[62] Eventually, when it can no longer rely on that minimal direct democracy which, despite all obstacles, still functions as a corrective within a tendentially self-destructive system, representative democracy collapses into "liberal democracy," whereby a growing array of rights and entitlements (presumably meant to protect individuals against the state) ends up restricting real democratic choices to trivialities and transforming the original democratic framework into a new technocratic system of social domination legitimated by a legality predicated on safeguarding the universality of rights and entitlements.[63] Here the main political divide obtains no longer between exploiters and exploited, bourgeoisie and proletariat, the owning few and the dispossessed many — the foundation of the traditional Left-Right political paradigm — but between protectors and protected, those who know and those who do not, those who can and do participate and those who cannot and therefore do not.

The resurgence of populist sentiments in the US today reflects widespread uneasiness with this pathological political predicament — one rendered all the more intense by the fact that it has not found a suitable articulation and, consequently, is constantly retranslated in the terms of the old Left-Right paradigm. Thus, when increasingly self-contradictory constructs such as "liberal democracy" are almost universally advertised as the only viable post-1989 political model, "democracy" itself becomes instrumentalized as a legitimating cloak for an otherwise statist version of

---

62. While the academic industry has canonized this work as a desperate defense of an unfulfilled modernity, its profound critique of representation (the critique of identity logic) prefigures all the main features of a postmodern epistemology. Conformist readings of Adorno as projecting the *fulfillment* rather than the *transcendence* of the Enlightenment project never indulge in concrete elaborations as to what that would actually mean, beyond speculating about abstractions such as "the ideal speech situation." Whatever emancipatory import the Enlightenment may have had, it never had any use for the kind of particularity and otherness — especially the obviously "irrational" type — Adorno had in mind.

63. This is the kind of dialectic Schmitt developed in "Legalität und Legitimität" (1932), in *Verfassungsrechtliche Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1924-1954: Materialen zu einer Verfassungslehre*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1968), pp. 263-345. This technocratic closure of democratic prerogatives is the result of the process of "motorized legislation" Schmitt identified as the logical outcome of that legal positivism institutionalized primarily in Europe, but also elsewhere, in the wake of the French Revolution. It is another version of the same logic which in liberal democracy leads the "liberal" qualifier to eventually overwhelm the "democratic" noun. See Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, tr. by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liberal domination.[64] Within such a context, populism seeks to vindicate the democratic spirit against that liberal statist elitism which has come to characterize the "free world." What generates the paradox of "populism" within allegedly "democratic" societies is nothing but the latest manifestation of the fundamental contradiction between liberalism and democracy.

There is nothing sinister or authoritarian about a *democratic* critique of liberal democracy. In fact, such a critique itself does not fall outside the liberal spectrum — at least to the extent that, within the spectrum of those often contradictory values constituting liberalism, democracy rates as one of the most fundamental values. As a political system predicated on popular sovereignty, "democracy" presupposes the people's absolute freedom as the foundation of all institutions, decisions and other collective objectifications. Although this radical democracy is always framed within a pre-existing social order sedimented with assumptions objectified in the system's basic units (such as what constitutes citizenship, over what particular territory it extends, etc.)[65] — all subject to the constituency's tacit acceptance – it recognizes no higher secular authority. Although shifting focus and politics every decade or so,[66] liberalism ultimately assumes fixed, universally valid and inviolable principles not susceptible to democratic determination. It injects an additional level of transcendental authority above any democratic constituency — an element of undemocratic governance independent of popular control. This is part and parcel of that Enlightenment ideology which substituted reason for divine authority and

---

64. Cf. Schmitt's discussion of how liberalism destroys democracy and democracy liberalism in Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, tr. by George Schwab (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1976), pp. 69ff.

65. This concrete order is not only the most fundamental of what Schmitt identified as the three main types of legal frameworks, but is ultimately also the most viable. Far from being a mere scholastic exercise in theoretical jurisprudence, the contraposition of normativism and decisionism to the concrete order was meant to show how both the first two presupposed the latter. The concrete order is paradigmatically populist, since it is based precisely on those traditions, customs and institutions, as well as on the territoriality characterizing postmodern populism. Problematic as it may appear, Schmitt's contraposition of *lex* vs. *rex*, meant to unveil the *class* character of Kelsen's normativism and the decisionism of the legal agents it hypostatized to the level of *de facto* rulers, is a prototype of the more recent (albeit, less rigorous) critiques of the New Class. As for decisionism, it can aspire to concreteness only if the leader deploying it is grounded on the concrete social order rather than merely expressing the utopian predilections of a particular individual or of an elite of Enlightenment ideologues. See Schmitt, *Drei Arten . . ., op. cit.*

66. Already in the mid-1920s, Dewey complained that: "The irony of history is nowhere more evident than in the reversal of the practical meaning of the term "liberalism' in spite of a literal continuity of theory." See Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"rights"[67] for traditional ethos, paving the way for the empowerment of a class of guardians of these rights accountable to no one but itself and whose power is predicated on knowledge rather than capital or moral authority. Not surprisingly, within liberal democracy, liberalism and democracy are often at loggerheads, as in the case of increasing juridical and federal intervention in local affairs on the basis of "higher" mandates. Whenever this conflict becomes particularly intense, "populist" legitimacy tends to resurface as an "irrational" challenge to the transcendental rationality allegedly embodied in existing legality. This is all the more true of an American populism suspicious of transcendental liberal claims – at least to the extent that this nativist outlook perpetuates an idiosyncratic democratic tradition rooted in an 18th century colonial experience predicated on the fundamental prerogative to structure life according to *particularistic* readings of an allegedly universal Christian *Weltanschauung*. While formal in character, this contextualization of populism helps explain the phenomenon's periodic reappearance at times of legitimation crises, especially during transitions, when the old is seen as increasingly illegitimate and the new not yet sufficiently established.

This particular reading of populism, of course, is at odds with most standard historical accounts, which tend to reflect the times in which they were formulated. From Hicks and Woodward to Hofstadter to Goodwyn, the various histories and evaluations of populism have also been political statements concerning particular problems confronted at the time.[68] As Benedetto Croce never tired of emphasizing, however, all history is current history. Thus the postulation of a postmodern populism does not pretend to be merely another abstract exercise in academic historiography. It is consciously grounded in the concrete problematic of post-1989 political realities. The end of the Cold War has meant the collapse of that friend-enemy configuration which defined both international and domestic politics since the end of WWI and, more broadly, the last remnants of the *jus publicum Europaeum*. Without a totalizing other, liberalism's self-delusion

---

67. The ontological status of "rights" within liberal democracies is inherently ambiguous. They are neither "natural" nor contractual in character. In the first case, they would be part of a theological framework explicitly ruled out by the US and most other constitutions, while in the second, they would be subject to all the contingencies and qualifications associated with contractual arrangements. The contradictory assumption of both accounts within liberal democracies, especially in the US, allows the judiciary branch of government — the most unrepresentative and paradigmatically elitist of the three, constituting the most obvious form of New Class rule — to become the most powerful and intrusive.

68. See "Introduction" to McMath, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-16.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of being able to depoliticize social life through the state can no longer be maintained.[69] The most obvious expression of this predicament is the growing phenomenon of *ungovernability*. The frequent gridlocks in the US Congress, which in the past both major parties have blamed on each other, have nothing to do with the quality of the Washington personnel or with the sagacity of the leadership. It is a structural result of a system increasingly torn apart by an axiological heterogeneity no longer unified negatively by "the communist threat." By severing the constitutional framework from its Protestant axiological roots, the relativization of traditional WASP hegemony leaves the system without foundations other than the increasingly untenable ideology of human and civil rights — the ideology of a bureaucratic apparatus empowered with enforcing a mandate transcending normal democratic politics.

Today, the crisis of liberalism manifests itself in a growing motivational and rationality crisis to the extent that, the more it relies on state intervention and social engineering, the less it mediates between the particular and the universal, the individual and the state. Here enforcement replaces persuasion and *communal* relations become entirely *social*. This is due to the fact that formal relations between bureaucracies and citizens are not *intersubjective*, i.e., they do not establish an organic mutual bond between the two parties, but *asymmetrical*, i.e., they reify both within a new interactional context. Rather than *mediation*, bureaucratic rationality results in separation and isolation. Instead of diminishing, the relation of dependence grows as both sides reinforce their identities: one as a giving, active subject, the other as a receiving, passive object. Consequently, depoliticized citizens degenerate to the status of clients making ever greater demands on a state increasingly unable to meet them.

Postmodern populism resurfaces as an expression of the ensuing frustration with the growing democratic deficit, inefficiency and inadequacy. However, to the extent that it is a political movement explicitly opposing the power of intellectuals, experts and "professionals," i.e., practically the only people able to theoretically articulate ideas, including those of the new postmodern populism, it confronts considerable difficulty in translating its uneasiness into a concrete political alternative — notwithstanding the fact that almost all major national political figures present themselves as the potential paladins of a vague populist cause they do not fully understand. Despite his initial popularity as the spokesman for this growing

69. See Carl Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations (1929)," in *Telos* 96 (Summer 1993), pp. 130-142.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

populist frustration, Perot's political flip-flops during the past couple of years and his inability to draft a minimally coherent program of political reconstruction beyond worn-out nationalist parameters testify to the obstacles confronted by any new populist movement which does not begin by transcending the traditional Left-Right dichotomy and proposing a new political configuration pitting populists against the New Class, democracy against liberalism. Without such a preliminary political reconfiguration, even the most autonomous populist program is bound to be instrumentalized by either one of the two major parties to relegitimate the predominant system of liberal power relations at the expense of democratic participation, self-determination and autonomy.

Beyond Left and Right

While proposals to reconfigure political relations must initially seem hopelessly utopian, they may appear somewhat more realistic after a brief re-examination of the sad fate of both the Left and the Right. To the extent that both communism and liberalism were different, albeit antithetical manifestations of the same Enlightenment ideology, it may be possible to reconcile traditional Left and Right ideals within a new postmodern populist perspective — one uncontaminated by either the old but now mostly forgotten "bourgeois ideology" legitimating capitalist relations of domination or the "social homogenization" so dreaded by the old conservatives. The new populism can present itself as the possible answer to hitherto unsuccessful attempts to reconstruct both Left and Right in light of post-1989, postmodern realities. Repoliticized in contraposition to a liberalism redefined as New Class ideology, such a new populist coalition may be able to reformulate and place on the public agenda the question of qualitative social reforms so dear to the old Left while simultaneously redeploying those traditional ideals so cherished by the old Right and systematically eroded by New Class domination (local autonomy, individualism, cultural particularity, etc.).[70]

In this respect, postmodern populism is continuous with, and may actually be regarded as the culmination of, the New Left's project of resurrecting the *critical spirit* of that Western Marxist tradition summarily destroyed a couple of generations earlier by Stalinism, fascism and McCarthyism. Both

---

70. For an account of how such a process has unfolded in France, see Alain de Benoist, "End of the Left-Right Dichotomy: The French Case," in *Telos* 102 (Winter 1995), pp. 73-90. For a more general analysis, see Marco Tarchi, "In Search of Right and Left," in this issue of *Telos*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

postmodern populism and the New Left are characterized by the attempt to find lingering signs of life in two allegedly defunct traditions — Marxism and the original populism — thriving only as part of the usual nostalgia for a golden past that never was. On closer scrutiny, however, this seemingly pathological concern with the vindication of an idealized past turns out to be the *sine qua non conditio* of any political project pretending to be minimally viable. It is only by reconstituting the past in terms of the needs of the present that it becomes possible not just to prefigure a qualitatively different future but also to re-establish a clear socio-historical identity. Without a sense of who one is it is impossible to imagine what one might become, independently of the cynically homogenized and sanitized "role models" so effectively marketed by the impeccably "heterogeneous" and "multicultural" culture industry — the propaganda arm of the New Class.

When most "official" political conflicts focus on *how* and *who* should administer what used to be criticized as the tendentially "totally administered society" (now assumed as a natural given), and when everyone defends "democracy" without bothering to inquire as to the institutional frameworks within which it can actually be practiced, it makes eminent sense to vindicate the spirit of movements originally concerned with people having something to say about decisions affecting their own lives.[71] Uncontaminated by ideological imports having little to do with local conditions or by transcendental visions of a reality impossible to realize on *this* earth, populism was the only genuine American grass-roots movement concerned, in various contradictory and unelaborated ways, with direct democratic participation, economic justice, personal freedom and cultural autonomy — precisely the values the New Left, unaware of its past, sought to vindicate in the early 1960s. As such, it concretely embodied both the "American spirit" and the "American Dream" as totalizing ideals and political projects of social reconstruction.

Historically, Marxists, anarchists, libertarians and various strands of fascists (understood, with Zeev Sternhell and Renzo De Felice,[72] as a Left-wing deviation) have all articulated anti-modernist sentiments against

---

71. For the New Left's original populist impulses (never explicitly acknowledged as such), see James Miller, *"Democracy in the Streets." From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

72. See Zeev Sternhell, *Ni Droite ni Gausche. L'Ideologie Fasciste en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1983); and Renzo De Felice's massive five volumes biography of Mussolini, especially Vol.1, *Mussolini il Rivoluzionario, 1883-1920* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965). Cf. also Paul Gottfried, "Le Origini di Sinistra del Fascismo: Spunti Critici sull'Opera di Zeev Sternhell," in *Futuro Presente* 4 (Winter 1993), pp. 11-116.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a modernity seen as a *Brave New World*, "Modern Times" and a politically correct *Animal Farm*, but have emphasized only one or two of its aspects. To the extent that a number of these objectives are at least partly contradictory, it is impossible to devise an ideal program able to satisfy all. What to emphasize and what to overlook, and within which institutional contexts, are fundamental questions defining communities and cultures as *political* entities contraposed to other autonomous political entities. Precisely for this reason, it does not make sense to attempt to social engineer *the* "perfect community." There is no such entity, and when attempts are made to constitute it from above, the result is usually disastrous: the objectification of the *particular* perspective of some sectors of the "knowledge aristocracy." Today, such projects invariably end up reintroducing new modes of domination predicated on patronizing "victims," allegedly defending their interests but in fact reifying them and thereby simultaneously legitimating the privileged status of a New Class of managers and therapists. From the viewpoint of an emancipatory politics concerned with bringing about a society of autonomous individuals constituted within organic communities, it makes much more sense to let these allegedly discredited "organic communities" manage their own affairs, even if they may generate ecological problems or institutionalize questionable practices. The crucial differences between liberal, social democratic and welfare state societies, on the one side, and "organic communities" on the other, is that the latter are forced to learn from their own mistakes by bearing the cost of the consequences of their particular choices (thus emancipating themselves) or else disintegrating and becoming absorbed by other more viable communities. Contrary to traditional interpretations of their premodern variations as static entities impervious to change, postmodern organic communities totalized by territoriality and direct social interaction (rather than ethnicity, language, religion, etc.) may be susceptible, much more than the welfare state and social democracy, to the kind of *Bildung* without which, as Lasch has shown, no amount of consumption and opulence will ever lead to the "good" society of responsible citizens and compassionate human beings.[73]

A populism of this kind can be seen as flowing from classical (not "orthodox") Marxism. As predicated by the old Lukácsian theory of reification, the welfare state de-activates ever growing numbers of citizens into clients perpetually dependent on a state-funded bureaucratic apparatus increasingly unable to carry out its functions – at least to the extent

73. Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that most of the resources allocated for the task end up as subventions for the New Class of bureaucrats, therapists and other "professionals" allegedly needed to deliver inevitably underfunded and irreversibly deteriorating social services. This bureaucratic logic (which Lukács and the subsequent Hegelian Marxist tradition mistakenly reduced to the altogether different logic of capital) was assumed to automatically generate the subject-object of history – the proletariat as a class – which, coinciding with the growing rationality crisis of capitalism and mediated by the infamous Leninist party, would precipitate a cataclysmic social change resulting in the institutionalization of a socialism of equal, homogenized "social individuals" in this, "the best of all possible worlds."

One of the fatal flaws in any analysis of this kind is the privileging of the economic dimension and the marginalization of culture to the level of an irrelevant epiphenomenon – an error Marx himself did not make in *Capital,* which stops abruptly with the chapter on "class" (the category meant to perform the impossible task of translating the logic of capital into politics). The presupposed unilinear Christian theory of history, secularized into a theory of progress going from Adam and Eve to what Adorno cynically redescribed as the equivalent of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Gulag, was seen as fueled by an equally questionable Christian theodicy positing "greed" as the *fons et origo malorum* – a paradigmatically premodern predicament.

Even after postmodern relativism succeeded in convincing most leftists and liberals of the cultural specificity and historical obsolescence of this peculiarly Eurocentric vision, the social *desideratum* projected by the latter did not lose its pseudo-universal pretense; it was regrounded in various versions of that Rawlsian or Habermasian neo-Kantian presuppositional metaphysics according to which "universality" is no longer a function of faith, natural law or Platonic ontology but of what is presupposed by the very nature of discourse, as if linguistic transfers of conceptual packages were the only form of "discourse" and the metatheoretical framework positing the primacy of linguistic exchanges was not itself constituted by an ungrounded and ungroundable New Class *Weltanschauung*. Bottom line: as Dewey, Wittgenstein, Husserl and even Foucault came to realize (and before them the long tradition of thinkers from Goethe to the Right Hegelians), it is *community life*, rather than the much narrower division of labor which constitutes intersubjectivity and, *ipso facto*, subjectivity.

Contrary to what elitist liberal ideologues such as Habermas and his epigones assume, "community life" is not reducible to a group of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self-defined "intellectuals" puffing pipes around a table trying to reach a consensus. The first task of the new populism is to delegitimate this predominant New Class ideology as a precondition for broader projects of social and political reconstruction. This task is necessarily cultural in character. As with the old Western Marxist project, the fate of the new populism also rests on whether it will be able to achieve cultural hegemony.

What this philosophical detour implies is not only the primacy of culture and organic communities totalized by age-old collective experiences, but the fraudulence of any Enlightenment (bourgeois) hypostatization of a particularistic cultural perspective to the level of universality. It similarly poses the questions as to who today are the advocates of this particular ideology trying to pass it off as *universally* valid and whom does its unwarranted universalization benefit most. The new agents of pseudo-universality, the knowledge aristocracy, are much more elusive than the old capitalists, at least to the extent that they hide behind a self-righteous Robin Hood victimological ideology. Worse yet, while the individual capitalist is forced constantly to reconstitute a nomological totality whenever he has to make a business decision, therefore achieving that level of concreteness Lukács identified as the distinguishing characteristic of "praxis" and Adorno redefined as the "negative dialectic" of critically contraposing the abstract conceptual dimension to its particularistic otherness, the bureaucrat (or the professional intellectual) is terminally trapped in that abstract rationality whose projection onto reality generates the dialectic of enlightenment. The traditional Marxist critique of the bourgeoisie and its worldview (as articulated by intelligent Marxists such as Franz Borkenau) became obsolete in the post-1929 world and can regain its critical edge only if translated into a critique of administrative rationality and the New Class.

Far from constituting what orthodox and often even non-orthodox Marxists used to dismiss dogmatically as "romantic reaction" on the basis of a dogmatic theory of progress, this approach provides the "critical theoretical" vindication of the primacy of those organic communities the Frankfurt School, shell-shocked by the Holocaust and Nazi organicism, was unable and/or unwilling to defend. It not only grounds the new populism within the tradition of classical (pre-Habermas) Critical Theory but, more importantly, points a way out of the infamous "hibernation strategy" which forced Adorno & Co. into exile in what Lukács derided as the Hotel Abyss. It also provides a way out of the aporias of the theory of artificial negativity whereby the tendentially "totally administered society"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coopts all internal opposition as new modes of internal integration and therefore relegitimates the predominant system of domination. In the same way the existentialists vindicated a minimal humanity against the Marxist-Leninist misreading of alienation as permanently disabling and reversible only via the external intervention of a New Class agency such as the Party, the new populism vindicates a residual organic negativity as that traditional dimension constituting the very precondition for social life as such and thus provides the permanent possibility of reconstituting even the most eroded organic communities — not as they "really were" but as they "should have been."

This populist turn of Critical Theory paves the way for a political convergence between those sectors of the Left which have not altogether forgotten the traditional Marxist critique of liberalism as a "bourgeois ideology" and those sectors of the American Right which, unlike its European counterpart, was never "conservative" in the traditional sense of relegitimating aristocratic prerogatives and has not yet been corrupted by neo-conservatism into a statist version of liberalism. If conservatism ever made any sense in the US it was in terms of conserving the cultural particularity typical of the colonial experience. In this sense, American conservatism, until its capitulation to New Deal cultural hegemony and neo-conservatism, was always in some sense populist. Yet, notwithstanding the euphoria generated by the 1994 election, the American Right is in shambles. The neo-conservatives are diametrically opposed to paleoconservatives and libertarians, while the New Right remains identified with dogma and intolerance. Recently, however, the latter has been rethinking its national objectives and, in the attempt to defend "conservative values," it is willing to consider limiting its scope within those local communities in which it does in fact already have an overwhelming cultural stake, paving the way for a possible populist turn.

At any rate, most paleoconservative and libertarian agendas could readily co-exist with a Left true to its past and critical of any ideological capitulation to liberal identity politics. Until very recently, the Left never recognized gender, race or sexual proclivities as political dimensions – at least to the extent that such attributes do not automatically translate into political divisions and can do so only in a context of juridically pre-homogenized abstract individuality. Race, gender and sexual predilections can never totalize permanent political entities outside a context already depoliticized by the liberal state. Within genuine political contexts predicated on communal self-determination (where communities are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not confused with affinity subgroups or voluntary associations), the role of gender, race and sex is a function of the predominant cultural ethos. In this sense, the recent reduction of Left politics to the elimination of exclusionary practices based on racial, sexual or ethnic characteristics reflects its abysmal capitulation to liberal cultural hegemony presupposing the eternality of the liberal state and its questionable depoliticizing role.

From the perspective of whatever remains of a serious Left, the belated acknowledgment of the "New Class" character of the socialist project – something anarchists from Proudhon on have never failed to emphasize – can only lead to a vindication of precisely the kind of small productive proprietorship advocated by populists. After the collapse of "really existing socialism," few believe any longer in the democratizing role of the state's redistributive apparatus. If real democracy is not reducible to the liberals' juridical equality but has to do with the equality of power, and if power is not an abstract attribute but something rooted in property relations, then any meaningful democratizing project will have to aim at a generalized system of small productive proprietors: the traditional populist objective. Postmodern modes of industrial organization have somehow already learned the lesson: the central plan not only bankrupts socialist states but also large corporations which, during the past decade or so, cannot dismantle the corporate version of the "New Class" fast enough. Fat bureaucrats pushing unnecessary paper in over-formalized organizations clog the arteries of both state *and* capital. Thus a postmodern critique of capitalism will also have to become populist and challenge the entrenched *capitalist* New Class, usurping prerogatives legitimately belonging to private owners who will have to reassert the only true form of democratic ownership: direct control of private property.

Can a populism predicated on local autonomy, direct democracy and genuine federal modes of organization supplant the nation and its agents (the New Class) in a postmodern world of high tech, substantial economic integration and instant communication? A positive answer to this question could pave the way to a major political realignment in the 21st century – a reconfiguration able to address the kind of concrete problems presently impossible even to formulate within existing liberal politics. Demagogic calls for mandatory *national* ethical norms may give way to genuine community self-determination regarding cultural matters; welfare may no longer be contraposed to an equally meaningless and debilitating "workfare" in a context where the old *caritas* and organic modes of labor allocations regulate and redefine the division of labor; motherhood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may stop meaning second-class citizenship for women; free-trade may no longer translate into job-exportation and potential rule by a distant and unaccountable global bureaucratic apparatus, etc.

Contrary to the predominant liberal view of the future as doom and gloom, civil wars, dead cities, cretinized cultures and robotized drug-dependent individuals, populism's recycling of a simpler life within functioning organic communities provides the kind of hope without which no process of social reconstruction is even conceivable. Unlike in the past, however, when the direction of technological developments, capitalist growth and cultural homogenization seemed to make such an outlook appear as unrealistically nostalgic, utopian and romantic, postmodern realities have radically altered the social landscape. In the age of the micro-computer, instant communication, cultural heterogeneity and universal education, the populist project is suddenly, for the first time, not only in tune with predominant trends but in a position to confront its modernist adversaries on their own ground.

L'homme et la société

Revue internationale
de recherches et de synthèses en sciences sociales

N° 115 1995/1

Les passions de la recherche (I)

Émotions, Investissements et Fictions (Pierre LANTZ, *Monique* SELIM*).* Jean-François LAÉ, Numa MURARD, Écouter-voir. L'empirisme au risque des perceptions. Monique GADANT, Les sciences sociales aux prises avec le politique en Algérie. Parcours d'une intellectuelle. René LOURAU, Chercheur surimpliqué. Monique SELIM, Ethnologie sous contrainte. Philippe CORCUFF. Quand le terrain prend la parole. Éléments de sociologie réflexive. Bernard PAILLARD, Le chercheur : au-delà de ses apparences. Louis MOREAU DE BELLAING, Motivations, sentiments et passions dans la recherche. Le cas Tocqueville. Pierre ROLLE, La même crise, de l'Est à l'Ouest ? Essai sur Pierre Naville. Ralph SAMUEL, Les grands récits. **Comptes rendus. Revue des revues** (Nicole BEAURAIN). ***Abstracts.***

Publié avec le concours du Centre national des Lettres

Éditions L'Harmattan
5-7 rue de L'École-Polytechnique
75005 Paris

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Searching for Alternatives: Postmodern Populism and Ecology

Tim Luke

Informationalism, Populism and Ecology

Recent shifts in the world economy are undercutting today's existing macroenvironments still populated by suburban consumers, which raises prospects for new populists to rethink the institutions of American federalism and corporate capitalism. As corporate downsizing and government cutbacks renege on the social contracts hammered out over the past century as industrial democracy, the new entrepreneurial economy of independent subcontracting, temp workers and structural underemployment, emerging now as post-Fordist informationalism, is forcing many to rethink old communitarian ideas, which were last seriously entertained by the populists. In the transformations being wrought by post-Fordist informationalization, radical changes "can be translated or transcoded into a narrative account in which agents of all sizes and dimensions are at work."[1] New political spaces are now coming into being, inhabited by new agents which are neither statist nor corporate.

This postmodern condition may signal the rise of "a new social system beyond classical capitalism"[2] on both local and global levels. As Harvey argues, this new social system is developing on the ruins of Fordist regimes of industrial production, capital accumulation and state intervention formed during the 1930s through the 1970s in national welfare states. Since the 1970s, a new regime of flexible accumulation has emerged in

1. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 408.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 54, 59.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loosely coupled transnational alliances of local market centers, factory concentrations, technology innovators, capital pools, and public administrators.

Out of this mix, transnational firms produce world cars, global hamburgers, planetary pants, or earth shoes from nowhere and anywhere to sell everywhere, making a travesty of either nationalist campaigns to "Buy American" or xenophobic reactions to resist "Americanization." Like Chernobyl, "America" as an economic formation, mass culture, or ecological system is everywhere. It is no longer simply the substance of a nation-state or one ethno-national population. It becomes the harbinger of a new consciousness as well as a mode of production at the nucleus of a global chain reaction. As it melts down to its most critical mass, the fallout is changing life everywhere. Spatial barriers and time zones collapse in the compression of multinational capital's acceleration of global production. As Harvey observes, "flexible accumulation typically exploits a wide range of seemingly contingent geographical circumstances and reconstitutes them as structured internal elements of its own encompassing logic. . . the result has been the production of fragmentation, insecurity and ephemeral uneven development within a highly unified global space economy of capital flows."[3]

Within such a context, Lyotard's vision of performativity may be what anchors the disorganized regime following classical economic liberalism. Today, "the State and/or company must abandon the idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial backers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power."[4] The New Class elites hiding behind these codes of performativity are global, not regional, local or even national.[5] On the other hand, new agencies from beneath the nation-state and outside big business now stress the viability of local communities, immediate environments, and regional commerce against the designs of large national bureaucracies. The cultural dominance of post-Fordist informationalism marks one of the most basic forces at work in the current world system, which is also marked by "the moment of the multinational network . . . a moment in which not merely the older city but even the nation-state itself has ceased to play a central functional and formal role in the process that has in a quantum leap of capital prodigiously

3. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell,1989), pp. 294, 296.

4. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1984), p. 46.

5. Christopher Lasch, "The Revolt of the Elites: Have They Cancelled Their Allegiance to America?" *Harper's*, Vol. 289 (November, 1994), pp. 46-48.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expanded beyond them, leaving them behind as ruined and archaic remains of earlier stages in the development of this mode of production."[6] Scanning these ruins for clues of life is essential. What are now the "traditional structures" of industrial cities and nation-states from times of high modernity no longer play as central a role in either the economy or society.[7]

After the consolidation of the second Industrial Revolution, the necessities of everyday life were no longer the product of individual artisans.[8] Instead, new forms of finance capital, professional organizations, interventionist bureaucracies, and applied sciences crystalized in an elaborate organization of production that linked together many complex machines, consolidating all those new devices, routines and institutions to form larger entities to perform many different kinds of work and to provide for the needs of consumers.[9] Small holding agriculture gave way to corporate farming, little shops were displaced by big factories, local economies imploded under global commerce, skilled trades were restructured as professional science or unskilled labor. The ecology of communities was transformed as these megamachines infiltrated everyday life in the name of efficiency, progress or development to fabricate industrialized macroenvironments. What once was home-made now could be store-bought. That which had come from local fields, streams, forests and soils arrived from faraway. Corporate marketing needs, professional scientific opinions, uniform government requirements all set the measure of ordinary existence from elsewhere, rather than local communities based among neighbors and friends.

American populism in the 1890s was a widespread popular revolt against the new systems of ecology fabricated by these megamachines. To serve the new agendas, the more sustainable communities of small local producers, who already were adopting appropriate technologies, frugal lifestyles and democratic philosophies as common sense solutions to many everyday problems, had to be crushed. The remaining fragments were integrated, on terms not of their own choosing, into new networks of social reproduction suited to the new megamachines.[10] If ecologies are the totality of all relations between organisms and their environments, then the relation between human organisms and their environments

6. Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 412.
7. Lasch, "The Revolt of the Elites," *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.
8. David Noble, *America by Design* (New York: Knopf, 1977).
9. Lewis Mumford, *The Lewis Mumford Reader*, Donald Miller, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p. 345.
10. David A. Hounsell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shifted when people allowed major corporations, pretending to be science and technology, to bring good things to life for them or permitted better living to come through chemistry, physics or biology instead of hard work, self reliance or individual effort. For all their faults, populists sensed these dangers a century ago and resisted them.

The Populist Movement of the 1890s

Populism has been regarded negatively in the US largely because of the meanings it acquired in the now outmoded Cold War political lexicon as defined by New Class social sciences. Anxious to contain right-wing mass resistance, 1950s political opinion research bought Lipset's caricature of populism as a rancid strain of working class authoritarianism into vogue.[11] Ignoring enlightened elites, such populists allegedly would give sway to their authoritarian tendencies by throwing in with either fascist or communist movements to upend the *status quo*. Thus, various populistic initiatives in the 1960s and 1970s were often dismissed as mobs of dangerous deviants threatening the basically progressive harmony of liberal welfare States. President Reagan's anti-statist and anti-elitist rhetoric in the 1980s, however, freed populism of any of its negative associations, allowing many new initiatives to lay claim to "populism" after 1980. New Leftish versions from Jesse Jackson, George McGovern or Bill Clinton clash with New Rightish visions from Jack Kemp, Newt Gingrich and Dan Quayle as all post-Reagan era politicos try to outmatch each other in their attacks on the welfare state. So far, this talk has been only talk. Meanwhile, for many middle-class groups, the economic, political and social unrest of the past decade remains, as Boyte argues, "emblematic or deep and traumatic disruptions in values and ways of living themselves. . . in such an environment, the call for a return of power to ordinary people — the defining project of populism — gains tremendous force. If experts, distant problem-solvers and the rich and powerful seem perplexed, impotent and avaricious, the appropriate solution is to devolve authority to those closer to home and to institutions grounded communities."[12] But how, where, when and why?

Populism in the 1890s as well as in the 1990s prefigures a struggle concerning how economy and society ought to be organized. It challenges the prevailing corporate or statist rules, arguing in favor of small freeholding against corporate collectivism, local economies over global diseconomy,

11. Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*. Garden City, NJ: Anchor, 1960).
12. Harry C. Boyte, *Community is Possible: Repairing America's Roots* (New York: Harper, 1984), p. 213.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

face-to-face community against in-your-face commercial culture, self-rule over bureaucratic clientism. American populism, as it rose and fell in the Midwest, West and South after the 1890s, was many things for many people. In some respects, however, it was a resistance against a new industrial ecology that emerged in the 1880s as the Second Industrial Revolution remade much of America into a nation rooted in macroenvironments constructed by corporate capitalism, national statism and technocratic professionalism.

In the generation leading up to the 1890s, the US was radically transformed. In 1860, the US trailed England, France and Germany in the total value of manufactured output. By 1894, it almost equalled all them combined.[13] Before the Civil War, the working class was outnumbered by slaves. By the mid-1890s, the American working class was the largest in the world. At the end of the 1860s, half the nation's manufacturing establishments were still powered by water. By the mid-1890s, electricity and steam drove much of America's manufacturing enterprise.[14] Before Taylorism and Fordism colonized American workplaces, a four-day work week and a three-day weekend characterized many communities, as artisan skills still gave many workers tremendous control over both "work rules" and "company time." Families and friends, good drink and good discussion, frequent breaks and fine naps all were common features of the everyday life of independent producers. Instead of corporate capital enforcing its monopolies over access to capital, technology and markets, independent producers manufactured goods and accumulated property in local networks keyed to notions of commonwealth rather than a national concentrations of wealth. The artisan economy was not perfect, but in many ways it was more humane, democratic and accessible than the corporate order for maximizing choice and productivity. While post-Fordist informationalism brings many new uncertainties, it could also eliminate much of the standardized mechanization and centralization that undercut artisans a century ago. Within the fading old Fordist industrial system, new artisan-based forms of labor, independent entrepreneurialism and communal production might be viable once again. With such autonomous economic activities, individuals and communities may begin to oppose big firms and bureaucracies that have hitherto clientized them.

As Lasch has pointed out, the loose alliance of corporate capital and state bureaucracy forged in the 1870s and 1880s sought to replace independent producership and classical citizenship with a narrow array of feeble

13. Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture & Society in Industrializing America*, (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 33.

14. *Ibid.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surrogates tossed out of a mix of consumerism and clientism. That is, "attempts to achieve a redistribution of income, to equalize opportunity in various ways, to incorporate the working classes into a society of consumers, or to foster economic growth and overseas expansion as a substitute for social reform can all be considered as twentieth-century substitutes for property ownership; but none of these policies created the kind of active, enterprising citizenry envisioned by nineteenth-century democrats."[15] The freedom and equality believed necessary for a democratic commonwealth early in the 1800s were never realized because Fordism, Taylorism, Keynesianism and Sloanism became the vendors of a new "industrial democracy" with its own peculiar forms of economic freedom and legal equality.

Populism can be associated with a productivist ideology shared by small farmers, skilled artisans and small town tradespeople, all working to resist the innovations of a new industrial economy from the 1880s through the 1930s. While independent agrarianism was a bedrock foundation of the movement, its ranks were much broader and deeper than those of smallholding farmers. As Lasch notes, "artisans and even many shopkeepers shared with farmers the fear that the new order threatened their working conditions, their communities and their ability to pass on both their technical skills and their moral economy to their offspring. In the nineteenth century, 'agrarianism' served as a generic term for popular radicalism and their usage reminds us that opposition to monopolists, middlemen, public creditors, mechanization and the erosion of craftsmanship by the division of labor was by no means confined to those who worked the soil."[16] Populism at that time represented a wide range of people still directly tied to their land and their craft. Individual producership tied families and communities to the environment in ways unlike those in today's welfare state economies.

Because of deep shifts in the organization of labor as well as changes in the property relations most suited to flexible modes of production, new possibilities are now emerging which recycle much of what was once attacked as "populism." As Lasch suggests, these attributes would include such attitudes as: "producerism; a defense of endangered crafts (including the craft of farming); opposition to the new class of public creditors and to the whole machinery of modern finance; opposition to wage labor. Populists inherited from earlier political traditions, liberal as well as republican, the principle that property ownership and the personal independence it

15. Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991), pp. 224-25.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

confers are absolutely essential preconditions of citizenship."[17]

In light of environmental constraints, the dream of abundance on which the New Class bases its legitimacy as a form of industrial democracy is proving to be nothing more than a myth. If everyone in China, or even in the US, lived at the consumption levels of middle-class LA suburbanites, the world would soon choke on smog, CFCs, styrofoam and CO_2. Luxury for all will never happen. Its ideological promises only survive to legitimate luxuries for the few today. The populists' awareness of limits pushed them to value competence, shared governance and ownership — ideas that progressive New Class managers checkmated with their utopias of consumption and clientism. "Populists, on the other hand, regarded a competence, as they would have called it — a piece of earth, a smallship, a useful calling — as a more reasonable as well as a more worthy ambition. 'Competence' had rich moral overtones; it refereed to the livelihood conferred by property but also the skills required to maintain it. The ideal or universal proprietorship embodied a humbler set of expectations than the ideal of universal consumption, universal access to a proliferating supply of goods. At the same time, it embodied a more strenuous and morally demanding definition of the good life."[18]

The living standards of the affluent cannot be extended to the poor on either a global or a national scale. Endless economic expansion will collapse the planet's biotic sustainability long before suburban consumption is universalized. Not surprisingly, corporate ecological authoritarianism, which has forced many forms of New Class rationalization on society without popular consultation, is under fire today for the anti-ecological arrogance it displays in impoverishing culture and abusing technology. Even more ironically, what worked imperfectly in the US from the 1880s through the 1960s, has worked even worse on a global scale since the 1970s.

Moreover, the spread of consumer capitalism on a national scale has also proven to be highly destructive. State regulation of everyday life has created dependencies and insecurities. Ever greater state intervention into the routines of families, individuals, cities and firms has made them less viable while creating major problems.[19] Just as state communism collapsed of its own weight, so too is corporate consumerism proving to be an impossible dream. *Perestroika* in the US may first appear as Reaganism or

17. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 531.
19. Paul Piccone, "Beyond Pseudo-Culture: Reconstituting Fundamental Political Concepts," in *Telos* 95 (Spring 1993), pp. 3-14.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gingrichism, but what will follow remains to be seen. As Lasch observes, populism provides some possible answers: "The need for a more equitable distribution of wealth ought to be obvious, both on moral and on economic grounds and on economic grounds and it ought to be equally obvious that economic equality cannot be achieved under an advanced system of capitalist production. What is not so obvious is that equality now implies a more modest standard of living for all, not an extension of the lavish standards enjoyed by the favored classes in the industrial nations to the rest of the world. In the twenty-first century, equality implies a recognition of limits, both moral and material, that finds little support in the progressive tradition."[20] When populism declined, new ideologies and institutions redefined individual values, organized urban society and unleashed a cultural revolution in the name of "industrial democracy."

As Leach suggests, "from the 1890s on, American corporate business, in league with key institutions, began the transformation of American society into a society preoccupied with consumption, with comfort and bodily well-being, with luxury, spending and acquisition, with more goods this year than last, more next year than this. American consumer capitalism produced a culture almost violently hostile to the past and to tradition, a future-oriented culture of desire that confused the good life with goods."[21] In the 1990s, new populists also are asking if "commodity production and consumerism alter perception not just of the self but of the world outside of the self. They create a world of mirrors, insubstantial images, illusions increasingly indistinguishable from reality . . . The consumer lives surrounded not so much by things as by fantasies."[22] Such fantasies can be and have been, normalizing. These corporate goods acquired tremendous force, allowing anyone to see themselves in them and everyone to see them as self-constituting agents of industrial democracy.

Macroenvironments in Industrial Democracy

Once such macroenvironmental webs were woven, pristine nature or uncontaminated ecologies become problematic concepts. After the Second Industrial Revolution, one might ask if there is any "nature" left. Is nature gone for good now that the corporate model of modernization has expanded

---

20. Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, *op. cit.*, p. 532.

21. William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of the New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), p. xiii.

22. Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times* (New York: Norton, 1984), p. 30.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

everywhere as a macroenvironment? All organisms are products of their environments. They may, of course, shape their environments by their actions. But they too are always shaped by their environmental settings. People are no exception, even though the rule no longer applies unconditionally. Why? Because the environment is no longer "nature," despite the frantic railings of deep ecologists about humanity's domination of nature. McKibben and Merchant are absolutely right, even though often they are not taken seriously.[23] We now live *after* "the end of nature." Nature *is* "dead." To take these insights to heart, we should admit that our real ecosystem is largely composed of commercialized artifacts, mediating the metabolism of immense megamachines thriving in their habitats of elaborate, artificial environments.

Mumford called these apparatuses "megamachines," or "mass organizations able to perform tasks that lie outside the range of small work collectives and loose tribal or territorial groups," which have, at the same time, "progressively multiplied the use of the more reliable mechanical components while not merely reducing the labor force needed for a colossal operation but, through electronics, facilitating instantaneous remote control."[24] Through bureaucratic surveillance and commercial normalization, the agendas of these machines are to control "the entire community at every point of human existence," because the global human ecology generated by such machines "escapes spatial and temporal limitations; it can operate as a single, largely invisible unit over a wide area, its functioning parts operating as a unit through instant communication."[25] The daily existence of millions of people and thousands of urban settlements depends on hundreds of these machines, which interlock labor and capital, matter and energy, producers and consumers in exchanges of directed work that sustain the life of these people in their artificial environments. In other words, people are mainly products of the products that constitute the environment: supermarkets, malls, suburbs, automobiles, telecommunications, and corporate entertainment. We only exist there.

Nature has been integrated into the megamachines of transnational corporate capitalism. Maybe this is the by-product of natural fission, creating a green "first nature" outside and a manufactured "second nature" inside. Either way, the key ecosystems of the human environment are centered in

---

23. Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Doubleday, 1989); and Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990).

24. Mumford, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

25. *Ibid.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

second nature and its megamachineries. Everyone who lives in a money economy depends on the artifacts produced by these megamachines — as commodified forms of shelter, food supplies, dress, climate control, work, entertainment. When easy access to this environment is interrupted by war, weather or crime, survival itself is imperiled. Without the megamachines, life turns into the solitary, nasty, brutish and short existence endured in Sarajevo, Haiti, Rwanda or Grozny.

This is the ideology of commodities under industrial democracy: the primacy of the totality. Everything must work this way, because everything does work this way. In an ironic concordance with Commoner's first law of ecology, "everything is connected to everything else," and the whole depends on each part.[26] Megamechanic artifacts shape their inhabitants even as they, in turn, shape these artifacts. Without linking into its transnational commodity chains, few people can live any kind of satisfying life. The independent producership of dignified labor within autonomous communities that American populists dreamed of during the 1890s is almost impossible unless, of course, one sees Somali peasants combing the hills for firewood and food in these terms. Nature is becoming a utopia, existing at best as the glossy imagery of Sierra Club photos or in the slick packaging of ecotourism trips, because many of its old secrets are now commodified products. In keeping with Commoner's second law of ecology, "everything has to go somewhere," both city and country are architecturally integrated, technologically linked and institutionally managed to function in corporately administered megamachines.[27] These business-based apparatuses source their inputs globally and deliver their outputs locally — albeit in extremely unequal levels — to promote the daily survival of six billion people. Most of these habitats are found in cities, which are not nature's metropolis but rather nature's necropolis.[28] High performance machineries of speed, power and comfort realize their ideological ends in each individual's use of their commodities. Without access to their ordinary habitats in the mall or familiar ranges in the supermarket, modern hunter-gatherer cultures created by the suburban consumerism of industrial democracy will wither and die.

Maybe the abolition of nature can be seen as a by-product of shifting collective megamachines in which individuals get caught along or inside

26. Barry Commoner, *Making Peace with the Planet* (New York: Pantheon, 1990), p. 8.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
28. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the boundaries of two technologies. These technologies rarely operate autonomously or discretely, but the circuits commodity-production-consumption may allow an examination of the constant interaction of: "(1) Technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things," and, "(2) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality."[29] Do these technologies of production and the self generate new amalgams of objective systemic productivity and subjective idiosyncratic consumption? The end users of commodities are reassigned through commodities to the role of capital asset, causing "the ultimate realization of the private individual as a productive force. The system of needs must wring liberty and pleasure from him as so many functional elements of the reproduction of the system of production and the relations of power that sanction it."[30]

For the megamachines, the liberation of technically imagineered fictions like "wants" or "needs" is often fixated on commodities hitherto inaccessible to them. Liberating these needs, then, will be matched by mobilizations of need fulfillments in commodities. Consumer goods can be supplied once new subjects are recognized as having the will demanded of good consumers.[31] Subjectivity is refined into material needs and subjection can be defined in the absolution of commodities designed to satisfy them. Disciplinary objectivities define disciplined subjectivity, because, as Baudrillard observes: "The *consumption* of individuals mediates the *productivity* of corporate capital; it becomes a productive force required by the functioning of the system itself, by its process of reproduction and survival. In other words, there are these kinds of needs because the system of corporate production needs them. And the needs invested by the individual consumer today are just as essential to the order of production as the capital invested by the capitalist entrepreneur and the labor power invested in the wage laborer. It is *all* capital."[32] A crude functionalism is not necessarily at play here; instead, one simply sets the sites of those elective affinities

29. Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 18.

30. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), p. 85.

31. Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill,1976).

32. Baudrillard, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drawing technologies of the self (consumer decisions to exercise purchasing power) together with technologies of production (producer choices to organize adding value) in megamechanical ecologies. Ideologies of competitive progress are inscribed on each commodity delivered to consumers as tokens of their collective liberation; bizarre ideologies of individual empowerment arise out of each act of product appropriation.

Consummativity is the operational summation of industrial democracy. It represents the first principle of the megamachines sustaining the development of a global human ecology: "Everything has to be sacrificed to the principle that things must have an operational genesis. So far as production is concerned, it is no longer the Earth that produces, or labor that creates wealth. . . rather, it is Capital that *makes* the Earth and Labor *produce*. Work is no longer an action, it is an operation. Consumption no longer means the simple enjoyment of goods, it means having (someone) enjoy something — an operation modelled on and keyed to, the differential range of sign-objects. Communication is a matter not of speaking but of making people speak. Information involves not knowledge but making people know."[33] In this setting, the megamachinery of second nature becomes "the environment." The third law of ecology is "nature knows best," and the logics of consummativity ironically affirm that this second nature also knows best.[34] Or, at least, the technocratic New Classes in charge of making and managing them know best. Maybe, to paraphrase McLuhan, who saw all technologies as media providing "extensions of man,"[35] people become psychic and physical media in second nature, impersonating extensions of these technologies. As the populists of the 1890's feared, the material coercion of consummativity is to be found within its authoritarian confinement of local choice and totalitarian denial of global alternatives. Through commodified freedoms, consummativity can "increase subjected forces" and "improve force and efficacy of that which subjects them"[36] in the circulation of its commodified artifacts.

The "values and ways of living" embedded in the welfare states are predicated on this ecology of complex megamachines designed and managed by New Class experts to create clientalistic dependencies. When

---

33. Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 45-46.
34. Commoner, *op. cit.* p. 11.
35. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet Books, 1964).
36. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Vol. I (New York: Vintage, 1980), p. 104.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

General Electric exclaims that "we bring good things to life," it captures the essence of these vast global ecologies which bring huge bureaucratic machines of production and consumption into life by dropping their goods and services into the lives of consumers for whom "the good life" is "good things." Goods and services are produced, packaged and purchased to bring the power of those good things to life for corporate capital.

The transition to intensive production over the past century also transforms the logics of governmentality, coordinating the administration of people, political economy and government. Increasingly, "the instruments of government, instead of being laws, now come to be a range of multiform tactics."[37] Unlike classical sovereignty, which expresses directly the privileges or prohibitions determined by some powerful sovereign, modern governmentality works through things and people's interactions with them as "public" and "business" administration. "To govern," Foucault writes, "means to govern things" in accordance with the claim that "government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end."[38] Both services and commodities provide a wide range of tactics for corporations, state bureaucracies and experts, to dispose of things and thereby also people, arranging them to lead to useful ends that both advance their interests as they satisfy their clients.

As Patten envisioned the system of mass production/individual consumption in the 1890s, "the standard of life is determined, not so much by what man has to enjoy, as by the rapidity with which he tires of the pleasure. To have a high standard means to enjoy a pleasure intensely and to tire of it quickly."[39] What the populists once advocated as deep organic relations to others, communities or the land, which the old nature myths once dictated to society, must be revalued. Such commitments imply husbanding resources, preserving nature on its own merits, or respecting networks of mutual aid in close-knit communities. Rapid destruction of resources in the pursuit of intense satisfaction from professionally imagineered commodities only to push on relentlessly to new experiences with others is the mark of "the highest standard of living." Frugality, stability and durability, by definition, become tawdry signs of inferior "lower forms of life."

---

37. Michel Foucault, "On Governmentality," *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentability,* eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 95.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.
39. Simon Patten, *The Consumption of Wealth* (New York: Lippincot, 1892), p. 51.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Federalism and Populism

As many Victorians observed in the 1900s about the course of their own lives during the nineteenth century, most people at that time still lived in first nature, much as they had for centuries. Rural life in 1830 was not all that unlike life in 1030 or 30. Urban life was somewhat different, mostly because of the rise of urban capitalism in the late Middle Ages. Even so, city living in most towns had not changed very much since 1780 or 1330. By the time the last Victorians passed away, however, almost everything had changed. Entirely new ideologies emerged along with immense new technologies for producing and consuming the macroenvironments of second nature. By generating its corporate vision of the good life, then, "American business, after 1890, acquired such power and, despite a few wrenching crises along the way, has kept it every since."[40] As the populists anticipated in the 1890s, this shift has been a major revolutionary change, introducing new values and institutions, and obliterating many of the old beliefs and fixed ways of the past.

Postmodern populist movements today confront tremendous obstacles as they deal with the effects of this revolution. The artificial environment, global webs of trade and basic ecologies, as they now are structured, all embody the agendas and prerogatives of state bureaucracies or corporate enterprises that have worked for over a century to reduce individual autonomy and communal freedom to a minimum in order to bolster the centralizing Federal government and Fortune 500 companies. But this project seems to have reached its limit. Today states and firms are shedding responsibilities and services in waves of restructuring that create new opportunities for postmodern populist innovations. With industrial democracy, corporate capitalism decisively defeated both American populism and European socialism. Yet these victories were won only to the degree that new macroenvironments with special ideologies of power, subjectivity and value could articulate their ends and expectations in the realm of artificial commodities. Advanced standards of living mean more than affluence; they also imply living in accordance with normalizing standards presupposed by industrial democratic citizenship. i.e., the acceptance of the imperatives behind the design, operation and possession of consumer goods. These material possessions bind individuals and communities, if only in part or merely for a while, to the megamachineries constituting such systems of material acquisition. At each nexus of consumption, complex alliances

40. Leach, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

elicit all those normalized subjectivities, expectations and subjugations perpetuating the megamechanical ecologies of industrial democracy.

In the mid-1850s federalism became redefined in centralizing bureaucratic terms, shifting power and authority away from localities, counties and states toward Washington. These developments occurred rapidly: 1) to acquire all or most of the territory on the North American continent in what became the trans-Mississippi West; 2) to control the development of free wage and unfree slave labor in the entire federation, ultimately leading to the Civil War (as the extractive agrarian economies of the Southern states practiced a more orthodox vision of federalism against Washington both before and after their secession); 3) to reconstruct the South after the Civil War in order to impose the victorious Federal reading of law and order as well as Northern terms of trade on the defeated Confederacy; 4) to pacify the indigenous peoples through warfare and resettlement as well as to determine the economic development of the territories in the trans-Mississippi West in accord with federal policies; and, 5) to foster the sustained industrialization of the entire nation through new policies for railroadization, easy immigration, colonization, naval expansion, inflation and military conquest. Federalism in the 1890s was something far different than had been envisioned in the 1790s by either Hamilton or Jefferson, Madison or Washington, Jay or Adams as federal state power moved with and against corporate capitalism to construct an industrial democracy capable of Americanizing millions of immigrants, normalizing millions of consumers, and disciplining millions of workers to accept strange forms of commercial reacculturation, political disempowerment and economic dependency as a progressive way of life. What little sense of federalism's separation, division and balance of powers, or subsidarity of powers remained after the crushing of most populist resistance by WWI typically boiled down to internal squabbles by different factions of New Class experts over how to divide the goodies in pork-barrel federalism from 1933 to 1975 or allocate blame in shift-and-shaft federalism from 1975 to 1995.

Arguably, the key problem in American federalism since the mid-1970s has been the impact of the global economy on communities and citizens. Caught within the territorial domain of Washington's rule, there are smaller economies tied to competitive capital that remain capable of besting everyone or anything in the global marketplace. Yet there also are smaller economies bound up with much less flexible monopoly capital or military support systems that cannot compete nationally, much less globally. Of course, the able wish to secede from the federation and in many

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ways they already have, as members of the privileged classes build private telecommunication systems, patronize private schools, trade globally, live in gated communities, employ private security guards and tax themselves in various systems of protective covenants. The less able are left seeking new entitlements from a weakened federal regime still coasting on the momentum of its Cold War authority, which rests upon the power to tax, borrow and spend and the prerogatives of territorial sovereignty.

Yet, in the 1990s, these instruments are becoming increasingly inefficient as the New World Disorder, a four trillion dollar deficit and post-Fordist informationalism make a mockery of Washington's former ability to control world events, regulate its currency, steer the economy and police its own ideological frontiers, geographic boundaries, or technological domains. A revitalized federalism centered on people rather than central authority, the locality rather than the nation, the states rather than the federal government, the sharing rather than the concentration of powers, might well be what is needed to adapt to the realities of post-Fordist informationalism for both the able and the less able segments of society. It is clear that Washington does not have the answers. In struggling to solve these problems, it has nearly bankrupted the treasury, corrupted many local communities and disrupted regional economies in maintaining the macroenvironments of industrial democracy long after it lost its ability to pay for it out of the current cash flow. The benefits of suburban consumerism have been retained only by robbing the future and ransacking the biosphere to keep the myth of industrial democracy alive, the New Class in power and corporate America strong. Postmodern populism assumes that Americans can do better, but not within the context they have ben forced into during the past century.

New Class managerialism, bureaucratic state interventionism and transnational corporate capitalism all have become coaligned in a corruption of federalism, creating a peculiar ecology that binds atomized individual consumers to complex global chains of commodity production. Every product increasingly depends on matter, energy and information outsourced from everywhere in order to operate anywhere. Consequently, almost no one can act autonomously as an independent producer without considerable dependence on outside sources of supply. New Class experts generate a host of social theories to justify these ecological insecurities as economic efficiency or instrumental rationality.[41] Large state bureaucracies create demand for their services by coordinating these exchanges

41. Tim Luke, "Community and Ecology," *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), pp.69-79.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through legal, fiscal, institutional and regulatory mechanisms. Big corporate concerns continue to control markets, technologies and resources by embedding more and more buyers in their networks of supply and demand. One must survey all these ties to grasp how these forces now bind people to their total environment. Unless and until these ecologies break down or redirect themselves, new populist forms of federalism cannot fully develop. Moreover, just as political federalism assumes that the forms of rule will work at the level and on the scale to which they are most suited, so too must a new sense of ecological subsidarity begin to pervade today's political economies. New Class expertise, bureaucratic statism and transnational corporate capitalism are centralizing, disempowering and atomizing forces that can further erode communal autonomy, bioregional complexity and local decision-making unless populist movements can vindicate the prerogatives of subsidarity against their overweening authority.

Ecology and Populism

Of all the fragmentary positive sciences, ecology remains the only one with considerable subversive potentials, since it can comprehensively and critically examine the totality of relations between people and all other organisms in their inorganic and organic environments. The megamachines of transnational corporate capitalism, aided and abetted by the liberal Welfare State, have reordered both the urban-industrial and rural-agricultural ecologies underpinning ordinary everyday life. In turn, a populist reconstitution of these economies and societies must disrupt the existing ecologies of such state-corporate macroenvironments, even as they search for alternative kinds of independent producership in local microecologies.

Huge corporate bureaucracies have been constructed since the 1880s on a regional, national and global scale to produce the goods and services needed for survival. Consequently, a few vast monoculture, monoproduct, monoservice networks now supply most of the matter, energy and information needs of millions of people at virtually unsustainable and ungeneralizable levels of output. Without these megamachines, life itself, in its urban-industrial or suburban consumer forms, is impossible. Yet, as the Cold War has ended, the welfare state liberalism and consumer capitalism which emerged along with these megamachines during the Second Industrial Revolution are clearly in crisis. Today many people are asking the same questions raised by populists a century ago, challenging the viability of interventionist welfare states and transnational corporate capitalism as the social contract of industrial Fordism is being broken or ignored in the 1990s.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet there is little discussion concerning what will replace these megamachineries. If the welfare state is dismantled, will its regulatory apparatus, which has underpinned the monocultures and monoproducts of modern ecology, also be closed down? Will the state accept alternative forms of rule to end deficits, reduce regulation, control costs? If corporate capital downsizes, will its organization of production, which has determined product design, service delivery, quality control and behavioral norms be eliminated? Will it tolerate alternative webs of production and consumption to reduce payrolls, rationalize product lines, revitalize profitability?

There is no definitive program for postmodern populism that articulates what needs to be done. Populism does not provide a fail-safe recipe for the future. It does, however, outline possible strategies by pointing out what to undo. The notion of an industrial democracy was deployed by small groups of New Class professionals working for bureaucratic and technical interests in the welfare state or transnational firm. Its concerns usually focus on policies of damage control or codes for technical legitimation. By taking the ideas of federalism away from these narrow interests and integrating subsidarity into a political critique of domination, postmodern populist forces may be able to reconstitute contemporary consumerist ecologies, removing them from their present context, as an initial step toward reconstructing the destructive exchanges of advanced industrialism with the environment.

Populists today may be caught within the system, but they can refuse to submit to its entrapment. Postmodern populism arises out of advanced industrialism, but does not have to be for it. As in the 1890s, postmodern populists in the 1990s are about finding alternatives to serve more people more fairly more locally. Even the most system-affirming corporate technologies contain self-subversive moments. Postmodern populism seeks to exhume and exploit that subversive potential by revealing the unseen flexibility, unknown possibilities and untested alternatives that contemporary technologies contain for developing an ecologically sound economy. The society of bureaucratically-controlled consumption, as a whole, can be undone. Yet its revolutionary "undoing" will be attained only by destructively reconstituting pieces and parts of its institutions, technologies and values in a new ecological "doing" — reorganized on a small scale, non-hierarchical, non-centralized basis in new forms of federalism outside the megamachines.

Any effort to embed ecological constraints in a populist society must enhance the accessibility of tools and economies to ordinary individuals, who for nearly a century have been denied individual autonomy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as producers by artificial skill monopolies and corporate-driven regimes of capital accumulation. Likewise, what is, in fact, an extremely simple and fairly brittle transnational commerce in food, fuel and fiber, tied to a few monoproduct output networks or monocrop extraction systems, needs to become much more diversified in many more complex regional and flexible local economies. Forgetting how to provision most parts of a basic everyday life on their own microecologies in favor of producing a few things for cash to buy everything else produced elsewhere and sold everywhere for immense profits in the urban-industrial macroenvironments has disempowered the many by empowering the few who control the megamachines forming this strange macroenvironment.

Systems of cultural normalization, which now underpin a transnational trade in the same hamburgers, automobiles, movies and shoes, could well succumb to new zones of particularity where populist communities define and satisfy their own material wants at home. Biodiversity should mean more than protecting insects and fungi in the Brazilian rainforest; it could also imply safeguarding diverse forms of life in different economies, cultures and societies tied to microecologies mostly apart from the transnational circulation of suburban consumer goods. Independent producership also suggests a production of independent relations with sufficient complexity, diversity and density to generate alternative kinds of civilization. This ecological outcome, however, is to be expected and even applauded as people define their own communities in their own bioregions to sustain their own cultures, free from the colonizing governmentalities that have defined global Fordism. A federal system of populist commonwealths, then, would not involve, like New Class managerialism from the past century, a forcible reorganization of industrial capitalism to make it allegedly better serve the collective choicelessness of the powerless masses.[42] Rather, these complex federalist transformations can begin only when ecologically informed independent producers undo the consumerist dependencies in everyday life that reinforce their mass powerlessness.

Towards an Ecological Populism

As the populists of the 1890's so intensely argued, the technical advances of the second Industrial Revolution have progressively robbed individuals and communities of their rights to self-definition, self-determination and self-direction. This rationalization without repre-

42. Paul Piccone, "Federal Populism in Italy," in *Telos* 90 (Winter 1991-1992), pp. 3-18.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sentation has engendered new modes of personal and community domination. The authority of technical experts and specialized knowledge exerts itself through the material artifacts and organization processes of corporate culture, benefiting its anonymous controllers and designers in the technologically competent ranks of the New Class. It is this anonymous authoritarianism that needs to be attacked by postmodern populism. Grounded in a modern welfare state that tends toward total administration, any meaningful ecological critique must also recognize that transnational capital inescapably works to moderate, limit and define such revolutionary thrusts.

New tools now can be developed that are simple, durable, useful and manageable in individual, household or community use to redirect the megamachines toward more micro- or mesomechanical styles of operation. By disengaging technology from corporate control, populist technologists could easily develop the renewable, inorganic energy sources needed to sustain a downsized but satisfying standard of living. A populist ecotechnics, then, would presume the displacement of current corporate capitalist production. The once inaccessible sciences of corporate- and government-funded professionals can be reconstituted as a vernacular knowledge accessible to non-specialists.

Thus, once cheap inputs of fossil fuels are removed from the scientific equations of agricultural production or engineering formulas for shelter construction, new habitat-specific rules of crop cultivation and housing development could reassert themselves. Those new bodies of technical knowledge would involve local experience, communal custom, collective goals and formal design to develop agricultural and engineering techniques that suit the particular needs of definite communities in specific habitats. Rather than growing only a handful of different grains on a massive scale through energy intensive monocultures or building minor variations of the same single family dwelling for state-guaranteed suburban mass markets, each household in many diverse communities could produce foods and shelter suited to its particular social needs and environmental locale. Under communal rather than corporate control, knowledge could acquire a much greater craft quality, melding everyday practices with theoretical insights. Ultimately, within these craft-centered bodies of knowledge (reminiscent of the old artisanal framework) de-skilled individuals might re-skill themselves. Where and how might these post-megamechanical ecotechnics emerge in populist forms? At first, it must be with the work of immediate producers in intentional communities. One

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rudimentary start toward reconstruction can be found in today's immense "underground- or shadow-economies," which through gifts, barter and nonmonetary trade already may comprise over 20% of the GNP in the US. A second source can be found in "self-service," or the growing production of goods and services for use only in the household, neighborhood or community, that would account for another substantial percentage of the GNP if translated into dollars. It is also beyond the control of national corporate and government planners. By stressing reasonable exchange, durability and renewability, these devolutional practices could be the beginning for a more ecotechnical organization of production.

Additional outlines for a genuine ecotechnics should emerge in populist communities, where communal relations would require new means of production to anchor everyday exchange. This ecotechnics would include many populist characteristics antagonistic to the megamachines of suburban consumerism. First, ecotechnics would produce goods to satisfy needs on a materially comfortable level — habitat-centered shelter, biome-based nutrition, environmentally suitable apparel, renewable resource use and durable artifacts. Second, the mechanical implements and managerial organization of production should be accessible, useful and understandable to all. These new process not only create different goods, but also new autonomous, competent persons, who along with others might wholly own, manage and control their entire socioeconomic system in their locality. Third, energy sources would be renewable; materials would be recyclable (i.e., mainly organic, innocuous and non-polluting); labor would revolve around utility, quality and accessibility; and management would tend to be democratic, non-centralized and non-authoritarian, which would be encouraged by populist norms of production. These microecologies would define limits and find ways to live comfortably within them.

This does not imply that high technology, modern medicine, complex engineering or grand science will be destroyed. On the contrary, those processes must be used to their fullest, first, to keep ecology vital and honest as a positive science of critical analysis as well as, second, to guide populism as an effective alternative. Technoscientific processes, however, could be downsized, disconnected and dismantled within their current corporate capitalist frameworks to be reconstituted within populist contexts of communally created and democratically managed relations of citizenship and producership. Without additional scientific research, many new necessary ecologically-viable energy sources would probably not be developed. Thus, small-scale microcomputer technology represents a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crucial contribution to an ecotechnical mode of production. Once it becomes completely user-friendly and ultra-miniaturized, computer technology will contribute significantly to the creation of a more non- hierarchical, local and ecological economy. Coupled with the latest telecommunications networks, computer technologies will also help make the present late industrial city even more obsolete than it already is. As a technology for concentrating communication, energy and information, conventional urbanism divorced itself from rural nature to dominate it. Microcomputer systems and localist telecommunication networks may make possible the deconcentration of communication, energy and information in a spatial system of organization blending the urban and the rural outside of the reach of megamachines.

Ecotechnics and postmodern populism should also encourage lifestyles grounded in "voluntary simplicity." This does not imply a gleefully-embraced austerity, which would mystify the falling rate of material satisfaction in contemporary industrial civilization. Instead, it suggests the self-definition of needs in local communities independent of corporate capital's "coercive complexity." By voluntarily accepting membership in the ecological community of competence made possible by ecotechnics, postmodern populists might move their society beyond the irrational pitfalls of the modern marketplace.

This new populism implies making the transition to a spatial setting that fuses the rural and urban into a new mode of "rurban" living. Rurbanism could deconcentrate urban resources, bringing "urban" commerce, art, society, letters into balance with "rural" crafts, culture, community, customs. Intensive modes of agriculture mixed with habitat-centered housing tied into windmill centers, solar ponds, household gardens or community woodlots could begin to rehumanize nature and renaturalize humanity by resituating people in nature. The anthropocentrism of orthodox urban leftists and the nature chauvinism of traditional romantic rebellion, in turn, could be transcended in a new rurban culture, which would redefine the human-nature relation along populist lines.[43]

Rurbanized living would not tolerate the mindless obliteration of arable land, renewable resources or fossil fuels in the technical nexus implied by suburban malls, tract housing and perimeter beltways. The benefits of rural and urban life must be unified into a new mode of life,

43. Tim Luke, "The Politics of Arcological Utopia: Soleri on Ecology, Architecture and Society," in *Telos* 101 (Fall 1994), pp. 55-78.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which could lessen the personal costs of rural isolation and urban giganticism with the advantages of informationalized communications and populist public life. Some of this could be achieved through architecture; some of it would be attained by a new federalist governance. Rurban institutions should promote popular participation and accountability in the management of the local economy and community in keeping with logic of subsidarity. Rurbanized settlements would fit a new post-megamechanic ethic of natural cooperation, close affinal association and the practice of skilled crafts by situating people in nature and by reintroducing nature's needs to society. An ecological subsidarity should follow closely from these political federalist arrangements.

Politics, Ecology and Populism

For nearly a century, large state bureaucracies and major corporate enterprises have organized and operated the economic, political and social environments by moving away from independent producership, toward dependent consumerism, out of free markets and into administered systems of commerce, beyond individual self-reliance and within statist regimes of clientalistic entitlement. What the populists opposed did come to pass, in the forms of Fordist industrialism. Yet, in succeeding, the loose alliances of liberal welfare states and managerial corporate firms have apparently so abused the environment, social institutions and common culture that their authority has been delegitimated. In the aftermath of the welfare state's collapse and the modern corporation's fragmentation, new populist movements are mobilizing people and resources to cope with a declining quality of life in the microecologies and macroenvironments generated by post-Fordist informationalism. Flexible modes of production, disorganized regimes of accumulation and post-Fordist systems of regulation all foster entrepreneurialism because big government and big business either have failed to make advanced industrial society work rationally or have chosen to spin-off their social control functions in numerous deficit reductions, personnel rifts, organizational downsizing or company restructuring campaigns during the past fifteen years. The writing has been on the wall for industrial democracy's new industrial state and affluent society since 1973, but the instructions were actually read only after 1989. With the end of the Cold War and the last gasp of the socialist specter (that Otto von Bismarck's welfare state and Frederick W. Taylor's managerial firm were built to contain in the 1880s and 1890s), the basic *raison d'etre* of modern

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bureaucratic society faces new questions. In the same way populism did in the 1890s, postmodern populism in the 1990s is trying to provide answers by probing notions of social subsidarity, community commonwealth and personal producership for new solutions.

However, the collapse of public and private sector bureaucracies threatens to take with it the macroenvironments of modern life as well as the massive megamachines of production and consumption that sustain everyday life. Clearly, the exhaustion of welfare state interventionism, as well as the bureaucratic paralysis engendered in corporate behemoths like GM, IBM or Exxon over the past 10 to 15 years is behind many experiments with both independent producership and populist politics. On the one hand, government downsizing is going to reduce the level and number of statist government redistributive programs. Often what is being done now is inefficient and frequently ineffective and populist institutions will need to supplant some of the state's responsibilities. Moreover, corporate cuts are forcing many workers back into independent producer status as consultants, small businesspersons, or temp workers. A standard of living higher than the present can be realized out of the microecologies that populists want to reclaim from the clientism of today's existing systems of macroenvironments, rooted in state-corporate industrial Fordism, fiscal Keynesianism and cultural Sloanism.

Populism today is a complex, variegated, multidimensional phenomenon no one analysis can fully articulate — much of it stands on the Right, some of it veers Left, a bit of it is a step back, a piece of it strikes out ahead. One might aver that the ecology nexus is insignificant in the scheme of things. In fact, one kind of relation with the environment presumes micrologies of independent producership, regionalistic communitarian exchange and personal citizenship. Another entails a macroenvironment of dependent consumerism, global corporate exchange and personal clientism. For postmodern populism to successfully reorder economy and society, another social ecology, radically different than the one that has prevailed for over a century must be developed from within today's failing modernity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reconfiguring the Political Landscape

Paul Gottfried

In 1927 Carl Schmitt published *The Concept of the Political*, wherein he set out to explain political life. According to Schmitt, political activity, whether pursued within a system of nation states, Greek *poleis*, or imperial administrations, is about the organization of people as friends and enemies. More precisely, it is about the organization of those who become allies when confronting shared enemies.

According to Schmitt, political groups are essentially life-and-death associations. What distinguishes political relations from other kinds is the intensity of the bonding involved, in the face of the adversary. Unlike economic or aesthetic enterprises, political constructs create peril for the individual, who stands or falls with his group. They are agnostic and often violent, and were it not for the European state system, by which central governments could monopolize and curb religious conflicts, culture, commerce, and what Hobbes called commodious living would not have been possible.

Nonetheless, Schmitt believed that the weakening of sovereign states had initiated an age of intensified strife and administrative dislocation. This would continue until the Western world could produce acceptable alternatives to the old European order of geopolitically and legally fixed states disposing over their subjects or citizens. Significantly, a number of Schmitt's disciples have advocated regional and populist solutions to the erosion of nation-states. In the European case, the Schmittians' argument for regionalism is that regions are already cohesive and can therefore provide a cultural base for a reconstructed political order. As Gianfranco Miglio has pointed out, historical regions can easily rule themselves democratically because of their residual cultural homogeneity. For Miglio and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other European Schmittians, the citizens' self-identity is basic to their capacity for self-rule.[1] Where populations do not share culture and history, so this argument goes, they are less likely to be able to live together as a community and to agree on the collective good.

It is a commonplace that the US is different from European nation-states and their odious ethnic baggage. Unlike Europeans, Americans are praised for letting everyone in and then promoting unity in diversity — although lately programs have had to be developed to "sensitize" people to the presence of diversity. According to a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, the US is based not on a fixed culture or on a "longshared history but on something better, the idea of freedom."[2] Several weeks earlier the same paper had proclaimed this "better idea" to be democracy, broadly understood as openness to new populations. Moreover, Harry Jaffa insists that America was founded on a proposition that all men are created equal and that the acceptance of this proposition should be the basis of American citizenship.[3] Curiously, the American Founding Fathers had different thoughts about this matter. Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Jay, and Franklin all spoke out against liberal immigration and warned against admitting into the new republic those who had come from cultures markedly different from the one they were entering.[4]

Another view expressed most forcefully by the followers of Leo Strauss is that the US is a modern democratic republic— one distinct in almost every respect from ancient popular regimes. Ancient republics were identitarian and organic, anchoring citizenship in heredity and "long-shared history." By contrast, modern republics are meant to protect individual material interests and are indeterminately elastic with regard to size and composition. Anyone could or should be able to become a citizen of a modern democracy which recognizes a common humanity, while also reducing it to a material common denominator. Unlike ancient or premodern republics, liberal democracy is portrayed as an open vessel receptive

---

1. Gianfranco Miglio, "La Prospettiva Teorica del Nuovo Federalismo," in *Federalismo e Società*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1994), pp. 27-28; and "Cultural Roots of Federalism," in *Telos* 97 (Fall 1993), pp. 33-39.

2. *The Wall Street Journal* (November 14, 1994).

3. Harry V. Jaffa, "Equality as a Conservative Principle," in *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* No. 8 (June 1975), p. 475.

4. A revealing anthology because of quotations from the American founding fathers designed to embarrass the intelligentsia is Madison Grant and C. S. Davieson, eds., *Founders of the Republic on Immigration, Naturalization, and Aliens*, (New York: Scribner's and Son, 1928).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to ever-changing social and cultural contents.

To anyone familiar with the writings of Thomas Pangle, Allan Bloom, Walter Berns, and other Straussians, these ideas will not seem strange. They are also the lynchpin of Paul Rahe's 1200 page discussion of ancient and modern republics.[5] The underlying distinction, however, goes back to Numa Dénis Fustel de Coulanges, who dealt with the kind of collective solidarity demanded of Greek and Roman citizens.[6] The sense of civic obligation extended to all things in the ancient city, including the duty to take sides in a factional war. Greeks who refused to become partisans in civil strife — those who remained *astasiastoi* when their fellow citizens had become fractious (*stasiastikoi*) — were viewed not as responsible but as unpatriotic, as Fustel points out in a graphic illustration of the duties of ancient citizenship. But modern liberal and democratic theorists have also not been pure atomists — at least not to the extent that contemporary globalists suggest. Contrary to the view of a long popular political philosophy textbook, neither John Locke nor Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that citizenship in a well-ordered society should be open to everyone. For Locke and Rousseau self-government requires the vigilant setting of limits on who should or should not become a citizen.[7]

Thus, in the *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke is careful to state that once individuals compact to form society, they act "as one body" and

---

5. Paul Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). See also my review of Rahe's book in *Modern Age*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring 1995), pp. 264-269.

6. N. D. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique* (Paris: Hachette, 1866), pp. 226-241 and 338-397. It may be useful to look at the original text of this magisterial study for the Latin and Greek citations (mostly in footnotes) dealing with ancient restrictions on the *jus connubii*. In Athens as late as the fifth century B.C., intermarriage with those from other Greek cities was forbidden, unless specifically permitted by agreement. The existing law stipulated that "*nothos ho ek zenes e pallakidos . . . hos an me ex astes genetai nothon einai* [a bastard is one descended from a foreign woman or from a concubine. One who is not born of an authorized citizen is illegitimate]." Note that the restriction here was placed not on *epigamia* with barbarians but rather on union with other Greeks who were not Athenians. In Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens* (Oxford Classical Text), 26.4, 27.1, Pericles is shown appealing to the popular party by advocating the restriction of Athenian citizenship to descendants of pure-blooded citizens. This act was the political debut of Pericles as a spokesman for democratic change.

7. One of the most widely used textbooks in political theory, William and A. O. Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers* (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1990), never mentions the limits on citizenship in Locke and Rousseau. Rather, the authors dwell on Locke's merits as an advocate of revolution for nondemocratic societies and on Rousseau's uses in building social democracy. Presumably Americans have already followed the prescriptions of both thinkers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through a majority "express a single will."[8] As Peter Schuck and Roger Smith show, even in this most atomistic of social philosophers there is still an awareness of the corporate personality of the body politic.[9] Locke assumes that when individual property holders come together to build society, they create something that can exercise a unified will. But that single will animated by the resolution of individuals is supposed to act in a way consistent with the concerns that bring it into being. It cannot be turned arbitrarily against the lives and property of its founding members or be changed by adding to the political community those not acceptable to the contractees. If such were allowed to occur, then the authors of the social contract would no longer be expressing *their* single will. The society in which they lived would no longer enjoy *their* consent, and it might be necessary for them to make "an appeal to Heaven" (which is Locke's euphemism for revolution) in order to reestablish an accountable society.[10]

For Rousseau, a restrictive concept of citizenship is even more axiomatic, given his coupling of civic life and civic virtue. Rousseau admired ancient Sparta, the Roman Republic and Geneva for teaching selfless devotion to the public good. He identified social corruption with individual greed and cosmopolitan taste. In *The Social Contract* he tried to depict a polity without these flaws. Such a project demands adherence to a civil religion and such overpowering cultural homogeneity that each authorized member of the community knows instinctively what is right for all. In one particularly evocative image, Rousseau shows free peasant-holders gathered under a sprawling oak to deliberate.[11] In this model democracy they are so much alike that for them the common good has become, for the most part, second nature. Laws are unnecessary, and those proposed win immediate acceptance among transparently identical citizens.

Immigration advocates, public administrators and democratic globalists are wrong when they claim to represent America's liberal and democratic roots. Whatever they represent, it is not the 18th century wisdom embodied in the current talk about the US as a universal nation. Nor is there a long tradition of equating democracy with something done by

8. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: Hafner Publishing, 1947), p. 184. See also the attempt by Richard Ashcraft to reconcile Locke's majoritarianism with his defense of property in *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), especially pp. 570-583.

9. Peter H. Schuck and Roger Smith, *Citizenship Without Consent: Illegal Aliens in the American Polity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

10. *Two Treatises of Government*, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-227 and 245-247.

11. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social* (Paris: Flammarion, 1966), pp. 76-78.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

public administrators: with democracy as a managerial activity and not as an exercise in self-government. Much of the recent discussion about immigration underscores this difference in perception. Until the Progressive Era in the US and the implementation of national social democratic policies in European industrial nations, democracy designated the political practice of self-governing communities. This was particularly true of American democracy, which until the 20th century was only minimally affected by the European Jacobin tradition. By now the change from the older American democratic thinking and practice has been so sweeping that basic questions about the identity of a democratic people are no longer permissible. Democracy, after all, is supposed to be about paying taxes, observing sensitivity rules (however they may be defined on a given day) and voting for the office-seekers of two national parties who, unlike bureaucrats and judges, do not really govern. In a *reductio ad absurdum* of this current concept of democracy, Leon Wieseltier chided the poet Stephen Spender for wondering whether self-government requires cultural cohesion of some kind: "Democracy is a discipline to be learned that goes against our common nature."[12] Until recently democracy did mean what Spender was accused of believing it to be — the act of self-government by a people united by culture and history.

On a similar note, Christopher Lasch attacks the wayward American elite that has neither a sense of place nor loyalty to anything beyond career ambition.[13] He attributes the present fragility of the American state to the overthrow of the traditional Western bourgeoisie by New Class social planners. He insists that the term "bourgeois" has been robbed of any historical specificity by being linked to the interests of test-taking yuppies or the economic situation of middle-income earners. What Lasch sees as the historical bourgeoisie were not only the architects of capitalism and urban civilization, and the righteous Calvinists of the 17th century, but also the class which brought down the feudal order in alliance with kings and other national sovereigns.[14]

12. Leon Wieseltier, "Abracadabrant," in *The New Republic* (January 6, 1992), pp. 28-29.

13. See Christopher Lasch's remarks about the nature of bourgeois society in "Revolt of the Elites," in *Harper's* (November 1994), pp. 48-49; and Sam Francis' restatement of them in *Chronicles* (October 1995), pp.8-9.

14. Interestingly enough, Miglio has defended the governing capacity of his Northern Italians by citing their bourgeois history and Calvinist disposition. Unlike central and Southern Italians, Miglio contends, Lombards favor not feudal patronage but hard work and civic responsibility. See the appended section to Miglio's *Io, Bossi e la Lega. Diario Segreto dei Miti dei miei Quattro Anni sul Carroccio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1994).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lasch believes that only blue-collar Americans have not been touched by the treasonous elites, because of their relative isolation from the yuppie gravediggers of traditional culture and morality. Along with other populists, Lasch appeals to Middle American virtue against the entrenched elites. What is not clear is how this will play itself out politically: whether a populist strategy will have any effect other than to relegitimate the present political class as the "spokespersons" for Middle America, the Yuppies, the multinationals and the underclass. There will be cooptation unless populism is joined to a program of political reconstruction — a reconstruction committed to the restoration of effective self-government. This may be possible if done regionally — an organizational idea that seems to appeal to a remarkably diverse group including Gore Vidal, George Kennan, and, most recently, the Southern League. Lasch is correct in claiming that New Class power is linked to globalist projects which demand the blurring of, among other things, regional distinctions. It may therefore be useful to strengthen such distinctions as a counterweight to New Class power. Within politically viable regions there should be controls concerning the franchise, eligibility for welfare assistance and immigration. All this will inevitably enrage the national media and activist judges, and will certainly require substantial constitutional amendment. While the US Constitution presupposes a federalism shared by the federal and state governments, it does not take into account other political units.

In any case, there is a genuine call for a politically decentralized America, refounded on self-government, which is not the same as sensitivity-training, multiculturalism or having one's life managed by public administrators. The populist revolt Lasch calls for cannot succeed within a friend-enemy grouping established and dominated by the New Class. The federal managerial regime and its largely derivative state organizations will swallow any decentralizing movement which seeks to work with them. Thus, public aid to private schools is not likely to preserve the private character of the institutions being aided. More likely, it will bring them under federal and federally-managed state control through anti-discrimination and affirmative action guidelines, both tools of New Class domination.

Both Lasch and Sam Francis have suggested that populists should steer clear of the twin shoals of New Class ruination: a globalized society and a balkanized US. They have also identified a sound populist movement with American nationalism, and both believe in a revived American nation state as a populist goal. The question today is whether it is still feasible to uncouple the American nation state from its administrative apparatus and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Class character. Along with Paul Piccone and others, I doubt this can be done. Almost a century of managerial consolidation has taken place in national political life. From the moderate welfare state begun in the first decade of the century there has been a steady move toward administrative-therapeutic regime that seeks to interfere with every aspect of life, while becoming inaccessible to popular recall. A rich but depressing literature already exists on America's transition from a bureaucratic state providing social services and engaging in income redistribution to a government primarily concerned with raising and lowering self-esteem and rewarding or punishing citizens as victims or victimizers.[15]

Such a development has set a pattern which may now be impossible to reverse. Unlike Mediterranean parliamentary regimes, The US government is relatively uncorrupt but, alas, remarkably intrusive, and does not have to worry much about traditional liberal or democratic restraints. It enjoys massive media support whenever it expands to deal with insensitivity and social injustice; and if it does not like what the people decide through referenda, it can and does use the courts to quash the popular will. There is, in short, a family resemblance between this managerial government and the Nominalist Deity, who does what He wills save for when He chooses to restrain His will for His own mysterious reasons. The only way the managerial Deity will be deflated is by fashioning a new politics, one that pits the kind of constituency Lasch describes against the current New Class and its allies. This new politics must call for a reorganization of government, one that will allow for the replacement of rule by public administrators and judges with something more closely resembling self-government. This can only happen if the locus of power is shifted toward governing units that have not already been co-opted from above.

Economic and cultural wars may rage, but how they turn out hinges on political questions that are definitely not of secondary importance. The American managerial state has been essential to cultural and social change. Indeed, the entire struggle over expanding rights by proliferating victim groups goes on within the jurisdiction of judges and public administrators who have the power to legitimate or delegitimate claims. Without the government's enforcement of affirmative action and anti-discrimination

---

15. See Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Captive Public* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Jack D. Douglas, *The Myth of the Welfare State* (New York: Norton, 1991); Willard Enteman, *Managerialism: The Emergence of a New Ideology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); and Allan Carlson, *Family Questions: Reflections on the American Social Crisis* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1988).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

programs, American universities and the texture of American social and economic life would be significantly different. The cultural wars, to a large extent, result from a critical political development: the replacement of a bourgeois political class, with a restrictive sense of constitutional legality, by the New Class, disguised as experts and policy wonks. It is this new political class which interprets laws and foundational documents and designates the collective enemy: an unreconstructed humanity. It is this Old Adam, identified with sexism, racism, fiscal frugality, the Religious Right, and undemocratic regimes, against which it is necessary to mobilize. According to Robert Nisbet, since WWI and increasingly since the 1960s, the American administrative state has prepared its subjects to engage in wars or in the moral equivalent thereof.[16] In mandated crusades against prejudice and insensitivity, the fist of judicial as well as administrative governance has been felt. In Kansas City, Missouri, Rockford, Ill., and other municipalities, federal or state courts have reorganized school districts, rearranged school classes, and raised taxes to finance these programs. Judges have done these things, without democratic authorization or a declared revolution, because they have decided to inflict their own notions of racial balance on public institutions. Like public administrators, they have come to exercise the prerogatives which among the Athenians defined hegemony: the levying of taxes (*tachsis phoron*) and the universal designation of friends and enemies. Such impositions were considered proper by the Athenians in dealing with subject peoples, though for themselves they decided these matters through public deliberation.

While the liberal Left has cheered *guided* democracy, the "respectable" Right has done little to resist it. This "moderate" Right has benefited from the growing public sector, by taking funds from the CIA and by working in Education, USIA, NEH and other federal departments. It has also called for the further empowerment of Washington bureaucrats, to impress upon the nations' youth "Judeo-Christian," "democratic," and/or "family" values. William Bennett, Michael Novak, and R. J. Neuhaus have added to these accomplishments an even more noteworthy one, plotting the spiritual descent of Martin Luther King from Aristotle and St. Augustine.[17] Other "conservatives" have made comparable archeological

16. Robert Nisbet, *The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), pp.20-40.

17. Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, revised edition (New York: Twayne-MacMillan, 1993), pp. 124-127.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discoveries, such as finding the roots of deconstructionism in William of Ockham, by way of Hegel, Lenin and Hitler. This particular kind of linkage crops up with some regularity in one predominantly Catholic and Anglo-Catholic conservative journal.[18] Traditional disciples of Eric Voegelin make vigorous use of the term "gnostic," while the neocons reach for "anti-Semitic" and "racist," to anathematize those who ask embarrassing questions.[19]

In any case, conventional political conservatives have as little to contribute to significant political change as their New Class liberal competitors for government patronage. Their talk about values in public policy is either cynical or pointless. Public administrators are not milkshake machines out of which different colored liquids will come, depending on which ice cream flavor is put in. New Class managers have their own values, and these are often implicit, as Max Weber long ago explained, in the work of rationalizing and homogenizing social relations.[20] Public administrators will not be turned from Jocelyn Elders into Girolamo Savonarola because some ephemeral politico makes a speech on family values. Given their tenure and entrenched power, administrators and judges can and do survive electoral whims and alternating parties.

For all of these reasons, it is necessary to forge alliances among those who are not likely to be invited to join "The Capital Gang," but who do recognize at least one inescapable fact: that the restoration of genuine self-government requires structural decentralization and, above all, the derailing of the present political class. Without that, it is unlikely that there will be any accountability from insulated public administrators, rotating collectors of patronage, or judicial social engineers.

From much of the available literature, it may seem that populism is an exclusively proletarian and lower middle-class reaction directed against social and economic modernization. Richard Hofstadter popularized this

---

18. While the specific reference is to *Modern Age*, this tendency on the Catholic and Anglo-Catholic Right goes well beyond any one journal. On this and related points, see my concluding chapter in *The Search for Historical Meaning* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 104-134.

19. See Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction* (Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press, 1981); R. J. Neuhaus' review of a biography of Will Herberg in *National Review* (July 14, 1989), p. 52; William F. Buckley, "Unpleasant Business," in *National Review* (June 16, 1989); and Norman Podhoretz, "Anti-Semitism, Right and Left," in *Commentary*, No. 83 (March 1987), pp. 2-3.

20. Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, eighth edition (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1987), pp. 36-38; and Wolfgang Mommsen, *The Age of Bureaucracy and Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

view in the 1960s.[21] According to Hofstadter, populism expresses the anger and fears of socially marginalized groups. On this view, the populists' anti-elitism signifies hostility toward those identified with unwelcome social and cultural change. Populist leadership is equated with the manipulation of popular passions, particularly resentment, and not surprisingly populism is made to illustrate the "paranoid, anti-intellectual style" which Hofstadter claimed to find in American politics. In a recent analysis of French and Latin American populist movements, Pierre-André Taguieff incorporates these interpretations in describing the "liberal-elitist vision of populism." Liberal-elitists "pay special attention to this manipulative dimension, so that populism can never be anything but a synonym for demagogy, indeed for mass democracy involving rhetorical intervention by a savior."[22] Such an interpretation seems simplistic, particularly when applied to long-standing governments. Taguieff notes that critics of the Brazilian leader Getulio Vargas persist in presenting him as a rabble-rouser, implied in the characterization of Vargas as a "Brazilian populist." Such a description ignores the fact that Vargas' rule lasted almost 25 years and resulted in the creation of a modern centralized state.

Even more egregious errors abound in the received opinions about populism in the US. The holders of these opinions fail to acknowledge two limits on their hasty generalizations. First of all, leading American populists, from William Jennings Bryan onward have not fitted the demonology their predominantly Northeastern academic critics have attached to them. Thus, Senator William E. Borah grew up in populist Kansas in the 1880s and opposed American internationalism, first, as a populist and, later, as a Western Progressive. Along with the Nebraskan Bryan, Borah condemned American imperialism, favored the independence of the Philippines and for many years fought for women's suffrage. He nonetheless drew fire from American anti-Nazis when he tried to block the repeal of the Neutrality Act in 1939. But as Justus Doenecke points out, this had nothing to do with anti-Semitism or xenophobia.[23] Borah was a firm opponent of American military involvement, who believed that privileged

21. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); and *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1966).

22. Pierre-Andre Taguieff, "Political Science confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem," in this issue of *Telos*.

23. Justus Doenecke, "American Dissidents," in *Reason*, Vol. 11, No. 8 (1979), pp. 45-49; and "The Anti-Interventionist Tradition: Leadership and Perceptions," in *Literature of Liberty*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1981), pp. 7-67.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

business interests and Eastern politicians had deceitfully pulled the US into WWI. He decried the American mobilization of the late 1930s as a repetition of earlier follies. Whether or not Borah was right is beside the point. His populism did not proceed from the pathologies contemporary anti-populists attribute to the objects of their criticism.

Secondly, the appeal to populism is necessarily selective. It is not an attempt to replicate the politics of a past age or of a different culture. Rather, it raises issues earlier populisms set out to address, without being mere imitations of them. Accountability in government and the understanding of democracy as meaningful self-rule are both foundations of the present populist renewal. This quest to reinvigorate democracy does not exclude particularity. It does not require the reconfiguration of a decomposed liberalism which characterizes the projects of such self-styled critics of intolerance as Jürgen Habermas and Amy Guttman. Both these "Left liberals" call for the establishment of participatory democracy informed by "democratic discourse" in a situation of enforced cultural fluidity. Through *their* behavioral norms and an imposed form of tolerance, Habermas and Guttman seek to make others accept a way of life set up by them and likeminded types. By contrast, true federal populism, can only benefit from cultural unity. It welcomes regional differences that can make possible a non-engineered basis for democratic consensus.

There is no reason that the call for popular referenda, strong local government, and release from remote but intrusive bureaucracies must come out of the social depths. A populist movement can certainly be regionally based, which was true in the American plains of the 1890s as it is in Europe today. The American populists were nationalists in their resistance to foreign military entanglements, but they were also advocates of local and state control of economic and political affairs. Whether this involves the extensive economic regulation favored by Kansas and Nebraska populists or the market economy desired by the *Lega Nord* is a matter of choice for the citizens of a particular region. Public accountability should be the only criterion of a populist economic policy.

In a long critical observation about the populist mentality, Taguieff notes that populists can be either anti-capitalist or devoted to the free market, depending on the elite against which they have risen in protest. Thus while French populists of the Bernard Tapie-variety denounce the collusion of public administrators with corporate capitalism, middle-class populists contrast democratic self-expression to social democratic policy. For want of others, Taguieff comes up with two constant features of *bona fide*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

populist movements: they are anti-elitist protest forces and they all stress the solidarity and self-identity of an embattled people. Much of this populist protest, Taguieff explains, has now been directed against social democrats; the "anti-liberalism" he and other critics associate with populism is shown to be in many cases a reaction to social engineering. Taguieff properly designates the surging populist waves in France, Italy, Austria, and the US as "phenomena of post-socialism."[24]

One definitional problem with many investigations of populism is the growing irrelevance of liberalism as a polar opposite. In France, the National Front favors an internal free market, while opposing Third World immigration and seeking to limit international free trade. In the US, paleolibertarians such as Lew Rockwell, Murray Rothbard, and Jeffrey Tucker advocate a total market economy but severe restrictions on immigration and a populist crusade against the "parasitic government bureaucracy." By contrast, recognizably social democratic publications such as *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* support both free trade agreements and a generous immigration policy, even for those without job skills or legal right of residence. The *Wall Street Journal*, which also advocates the same positions, favors less government control of commerce, but is generally comfortable with the American managerial state, give or take a few agencies. In no way do its editorials approach the indignant call for bringing down the federal administrative apparatus, which is characteristic of the populist paleolibertarians.

It is idle to ask which of these sides represents most consistently the "spirit of liberalism." All appeal to a liberal heritage which harks back to an earlier century, yet none stands entirely within it. Some Left-liberals, most notably Stephen Holmes and Justice William Brennan, equate the liberal legacy with universality and an expanding list of human rights, but herein lies a problem. Whereas it may be possible to defend the current Left-liberalism with odds and ends from Locke or Jefferson, liberals in other ages took political stands that would simply not fit the Left-liberal agenda. Indeed, most populist movements embody less what is anti-liberal than what self-declared liberals have not wished to transfer from an older liberalism to their own. The combination of debureaucratization, regional autonomy and anti-immigrationism typical of such populist movements as the *Lega Nord* and the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei* does not indicate "anti-liberalism" as such. Rather, it points up positions that today's journalists and academics have carefully removed from their own sanitized liberalism.

24. Taguieff, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thus opponents of the *Lega Nord* complain that a federal reconstruction of the Italian First Republic will undermine the "anti-fascist educational process" begun with the postwar constitution. This may or may not be true, but has no bearing on what the *Lega Nord* is proposing. Its call for a semi-autonomous regional republic, one featuring free trade and a free market economy, recalls the language and mindset of Italian classical liberals. As Miglio *points out,* the *zoccolo borghese* on which the league stands is not a company of *lazzaroni*. It consists of those who would have rallied to the liberal monarchy which unified Italy in the 1860s. The *leghisti* are now abandoning, or so they plausibly argue, not a therapeutic experiment in anti-fascism but a "corrupt patron-client regime." It is one that Miglio condemns for betraying the fond patriotic hopes of his Milanese merchant forebears.

Even more pertinent to this discussion have been Habermas' fears that a German political culture not exclusively anchored in his rules of democratic living may return to the Nazi past. Habermas insists that Germans think of themselves as a new people — one created exclusively on the basis of "human rights" and postwar democratic norms. While such ideas may coincide with someone's reconceptualized liberal heritage, very different positions can be drawn from the liberalism of the past. Most continental liberals in the 19th century were nationalists and, incidentally, did not hold those generous views on free trade popularized by Richard Cobden and John Bright. In the US the acceptance of tariffs and of severe limits on immigration was the prevalent view of the founders, and one that Jefferson also held and stated. Contemporary liberals would likely gag at this passage from John Jay's reflections on America's providential blessings found in Federalist No. 2: "With equal pleasure I have as often taken notice that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people — a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs. . . " [25]

Not exactly the idiosyncratic musings of an isolated bigot, these are in fact 18th century commonplaces about the suitability of a people for republican institutions. They were also the sentiments that an esteemed author of the US Constitution and later first Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court was expressing to sympathetic readers. From Locke on, classical liberals drew a sharp distinction between natural rights to life

25. *The Federalist Papers* (New York: The New American Library, 1961), p. 38.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and property and the rights and responsibilities attached to citizenship within a particular society. Locke and Jefferson perceived no contradiction between limiting citizenship in a body politic on the basis of cultural compatibility and the existence of universal "natural rights."

It may be helpful, then, to retire the changing standards of liberal orthodoxy in favor of a more applicable and less invidious political taxonomy. The rise of the new populism may offer the opportunity for this, inasmuch as it dramatizes the polemical nature of the charge of antiliberalism being raised by antipopulists. These critics wish to ignore whatever liberal heritage their opponents are invoking; and they think of democracy as a form of thought-control at the disposal of enlightened administrators and public educators. Taguieff finds it disconcerting that populists appeal to Aristotle's view of the ancient *polis* as a regime founded on the absolute identity between rulers and ruled.[26] Jefferson also believed this kind of identity was integral to self-government, and it may be one of the few beliefs he extracted from ancient republicanism. Such self-rule *avant la lettre* may not always be practicable for a heavily populated country demanding multiple social services, or at least so it is claimed. But it does tell much about "problems in American democracy" (as today's compulsory high school civics course are named), that journalists such as David Broder and Al Hunt mock those who "refuse to face the fact" that self-government is about public administration and public policy. Though this administrative regime may be about policy-making, it is only marginally about citizens governing themselves.

In place of the overworked contrast between "liberals" and inhabitants of outer darkness, it may be useful to substitute a new conceptual polarity — one between political and economic globalists and their populist opponents. One of the main targets of current populist formations is rule by a transnational managerial class. This rule is seen as more or less the same, whether associated with corporate capitalism, "human rights" experts, or social democratic administrators. It is massive impersonal control parading as progress, which fans populist hostility. In the face of this tide of enmity, certain strategies have been brought to bear. As soon as debate begins, the political class, or its academic cheering gallery, reach for their dog-eared copies of *The Authoritarian Personality* or *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, whereupon, after stern admonition, they hold forth on the need for "democratic education." Members of what Francis calls the

26. Taguieff, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"archaic Right" can also be counted on to fall into line, and they do this by repetitiously reciting a civics lesson, i.e., that the Constitution set up a representative republic, not a direct democracy.[27] All this, of course, is self-evident but also historically irrelevant. The framers did not have to deal with widespread criminal violence in their streets, the nationalization of the franchise, invasion by illegal immigrants, rule by unelected "civil servants" and legislating judges, and much else that has occurred in the 20th century. They also had no reason to assume that most politics would not continue, as it did in their time, to go on at the local level.

In dealing with the populist temptation of the Left, Ellen Willis exemplifies the possibility of conducting a political discussion without anachronistic name-calling.[28] An avowed internationalist and an advocate of women's and gay liberation, Willis warns leftists against embracing populism as "a nonstatist, decentralized model of democracy." Populism, she insists, "does not aim to abolish class distinctions." It "defines membership in a community through the exclusion of others and defends the received values of that community against outsiders." She cites the "dark side of populism," seen to "function as the protective guardian of local community and autonomous social institutions against the meddling of the Left and its social engineering." Unlike the custodians of liberal terminology, Willis pursues *her* debate with the populist Right in terms of the issues of the day. As a supporter of a Left-liberal administration calling for cultural revolution, naturally she has no desire to preserve traditional communities in the name of decentralized democracy. Nor does she fall back dishonestly on communitarian language when her intent is to reconstruct social relations. One may differ with her politics, but Willis does not misrepresent what she favors. She labels her opponents as reactionary, but not as deviationists from some imaginary eternal liberal verity.

Anti-populists should learn from this clean form of debate. Further talk about the "politics of illiberalism" will not silence the growing opposition. Such talk is invariably tendentious. Those engaged in it pretend to

---

27. Samuel T. Francis, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), especially pp. 222-231. Francis blames the anti-populist mentality of the Old Right for its strategic blunders and eventual marginalization. Though this Right criticized extensively the "postbourgeois managerial regime," it also sought an accommodation with its enemy and finally allowed itself to be captured by neoconservative New Class representatives. In Francis' provocative analysis, the Old Right is made to resemble Marx' petite bourgeoisie, a group that is prevented by its social pretensions and archaic attitudes from supporting revolutionary change.

28. Ellen Willis in *The Village Voice* (20 December 1994).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

belong to a liberal faith that has come down from some primitive church, more or less inviolate. But this kind of ecclesiology has become hard to sustain now that the liberal faith lies scattered across the political spectrum. New frames of reference are necessary to comprehend the political landscape in this age of postmodernity and post-liberalism.

new left review

'An integral education in theory, culture, politics and history . . . a remarkable journal, like no other in its serious and rigorous intellectual standards' EDWARD SAID

144 PAGES EVERY TWO MONTHS FROM LONDON

NLR 211 Julian Stallabrass CYBERHYPE AND UTOPIA; Andrew Glyn TACKLING UNEMPLOYMENT; John Roemer THE ECONOMICS OF EQUALITY; Gopal Balakrishnan NATIONALISM AND THE IMAGINATION; Joan Martinez-Alier GREEN ECONOMICS; Eleni Varikas GENDER AND EXPERIENCE IN HISTORY; Aidan Rankin SMALL REVOLUTION IN URUGUAY; Jonathan Rée DELEUZE AND GUATTARI.

SOME RECENT OUTSTANDING ARTICLES **NLR 210** JOEL ROGERS Reinventing Progressive Politics; JEFFREY C. ALEXANDER Fin de Siècle Social Theory; **NLR 209** FREDRIC JAMESON Derrida's Marx; STUART HALL Caribbean Identities; RICHARD WALKER California Rages Against the Dying of the Light; ELIZABETH WILSON The City in Rhetoric; **NLR 208** CARLO GINZBURG Morality and Distance; CATHERINE HALL Imperial Citizenship; ROBERTO UNGER/CUI China in the Russian Mirror; **NLR 207** G.A. COHEN Labour and Social Justice; ROBERT FITCH New York's Ruin; SABINA LOVIBOND Feminist Reasoning; **NLR 206** ERIC HOBSBAWM Barbarism: A User's Guide; FRANCO MORETTI A Historical Atlas of European Literature. *Forthcoming* Michael Mann, Goran Therborn, Tom Nairn on *Age of Extremes*

INTRODUCTORY OFFER New subscribers can begin with NLR 210 or 211, and can choose a FREE BOOK *and* FREE BACK ISSUE

I would like to begin my annual subscription (6 issues) with issue 210/211. Please send me NLR ..... as my free back issue and the ticked free book:

Send to

New Left Review 120-126 Lavender Avenue Mitcham Surrey CR4 3HP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Black Populism and the Quest for Racial Unity

Larry A. Greene

Along with Reconstruction, populism often elicits a certain wonder about the road not taken. Eric Foner's study of the immediate post-Civil War era explored not only the successes but also the ultimate failure of the Civil War generation to create a biracial democracy in the South. C. Vann Woodward in his classic work on Southern history, investigated the racially democratic road taken by the early populists only to be thwarted by southern elites exploiting Southern white fears of "Negro domination" and the populists themselves, eventually relapsing into white supremacist ideology.[1] The populists' ambivalent commitment to political rights for blacks derived in part from the lingering belief in the racial inferiority of African-Americans and their unassimilability into the socioeconomic and political fabric of the nation.

The failures of Reconstruction and of the populist movement set the parameters for much of 20th century race relations in the South and to a lesser extent in the North. While the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s has been called the "Second Reconstruction," a number of movements arose in the urban North in the 1930s and 1940s involving many new Southern black migrants seeking representation in businesses, hospitals, schools and political clubs that touched their lives.[2] These

1. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951).

2. John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African-Americans* (New York, McGraw Hill, 1994), pp. 492-531.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

movements already employed those tactics of boycotts, picketing and marches that later came to characterize the Civil Rights Movement. Depression and WWII era urban black protests foreshadowed the movements for community control that characterized the urban North in the 1960s and 1970s as blacks sought representation, and in some cases control, from mayoralty offices to police commissioners to education superintendents. Obviously, there are differences between the 19th century rural biracial populist movement and the 20th century primarily African-American urban movement. Michael Federici notes the difficulty in defining populism: it is "more a sentiment . . . than a systematic political theory or ideology" with the various versions of populism developing "its features according to the particular historical circumstances it confronts."[3] According to Margaret Canovan, the difficulty in defining populism is further compounded by scholars attempting to formulate a "general theory of populism that can explain each variety." Movements often called populist often do not share a common ideology, economic goals, or style. Populist sentiments oppose elitism, exalt popular participation and emphasizes the "pathos" of the common man.[4]

In order to understand the possibilities and limitations of populism, as well as the manner in which the failure of Southern populist politics encouraged Northern migration and the subsequent development of an African-American urban populism, it is necessary to explore the 19th century populist prototype. Traces of this early black urban populism can be found in the 1930s boycotts of white institutions such as the movement for black employment in Harlem's 125th Street business district.

I

Populism was not a "political aberration but the culmination of a pattern of agrarian protest which had existed since Reconstruction." The wellsprings lie in the 1880s with the disappearance of "black Republicanism," the decline of agricultural prices, a deteriorating standard of living for those small farmers entering the cotton market, and in some cases impoverishment and dispossession among Southern yeomanry. With the disappearance of fears of "Negro domination," white racial cohesion lessened as the yeomen and poorer white farmers grew critical of the economic

3. Michael P. Federici, *The Challenge of Populism: The Rise of Rightwing Democratism in Postwar America* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 25.

4. Margaret Canovan, "Two Strategies in the Study of Populism," in *Political Studies* 30 (December 1982) pp. 544, 545, 542.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

policies of the planter elites, merchants, bankers, and railroads. In the pre-populist years, the Southern Alliance was formed in the mid-1870s and the Colored Alliance in Texas in December of 1886.[5] Prior to the major populist thrust in the 1890's, fissures developed in the solid wall of white supremacy by the mid-1800's, e.g., in the Georgia upcountry struggle over grazing rights. In post-Reconstruction Georgia, "stock laws" were passed by various counties restricting hunting and fishing to specific seasons and restricting access to game on private land. In the *antebellum* days, whites and privileged slaves were not subject to these restrictions. Times had changed in the post-Reconstruction era as declining cotton prices led to foreclosures by merchants, who became landlords, and previous small landholders, who became tenants or sharecroppers. Poorer white yeoman farmers, blacks, and tenants of various colors opposed these laws. The right to forage allowed landless whites and blacks to own and raise livestock. With a horse or mule, a cow and some hogs, a tenant could meet part of his family's basic needs.[6]

In the Georgian upcountry, the stock-law conflict anticipated the issues and biracial coalition of the populist movement. L. J. Jones, a white Georgia hill farmer opponent of the stock laws, suggested in 1885 the commonality of economic interests between poor whites and blacks: "We as poor men and Negroes do not need the law, but we need a democratic government and independence that will do the common people good." John Stogner of Carol County noted the "stock law would be a benefit to a few individuals who have plenty of water on their land, while nine-tenths of the people will be in a deplorable condition." The class and racial characteristics of the stock-law opponents did not go unnoticed by advocates of the law seeking restrictive fencing to keep the animals of the lower sorts from grazing on their lands. John H. Dent, a Georgia landlord, attributed an early defeat of the stock law to two-thirds of our own population [who] own no land but own on an average of one cow and two or three pigs." Non-landholders and the "colored element" were solidly against the law. Clearly, some landlords had difficulty fathoming that economic self-interest, however temporary, could transcend race and lead some white tenants

---

5. Gerald H. Gaither, *Blacks and the Populist Revolt: Ballots and Bigotry in the "New South"* (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1977), pp. 15, 26; Woodward, *Origins of the New South, op. cit.*, pp. 178-186.

6. Steven Hahn, "Common Right and Commonwealth: The Stock-Law Struggle and the Roots of Southern Populism," in J. Morgan Sousser and James M. McPherson, eds., *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 56, 61.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and croppers to seek common economic ground with blacks and "from some conjectured up fallacy of a reason vote with Africa."[7]

The stock-law struggle did not become a major part of the populist agenda, but some anti-stock-law critics became populist leaders in the 1890s. The struggle in the Georgia upcountry demonstrated the existence of shared economic interests across racial lines to Georgia white populists. Tom Watson, the Southern populist leader from Georgia, observed that every material interest is identical for poor whites and blacks. To Watson and other populists, race was a divisive political tactic to separate whites and blacks who shared a similar economic fate: "You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings. You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you."[8] Watson criticized the South Carolina followers of Ben Tillman for their efforts to disenfranchise black voters. In 1896, Texas populists stated: "We are in favor of equal justice and protection under the law to all citizens without reference to race, color or nationality."[9] Watson condemned anti-black violence and Klan style lynch law and reportedly called out 2,000 white farmers to protect a black clergyman active in the populist cause.[10] The People's Party sought to include African-Americans in their conference and to recruit the black vote. By selecting blacks, like William Warwick of the Virginia Colored Alliance as an officer of the 1892 St. Louis convention, or the election of two African-Americans by the Texas populist convention to serve on the state executive, populists hoped to convey a color blind image at least in terms of black political and legal rights. At the St. Louis Convention, some 97 seats were available for representatives of the Colored Alliance in an effort to attract blacks to the populist banner.[11]

Populism asserted a natural harmony between black and white farmers as members of the agricultural producing class. Blacks were as much

---

7. Jones, Stogner, and Dent, quoted in Steven Hahn. "Commonright and Commonwealth," pp. 54, 61, 62, 67, 6S, 70.

8. Tom Watson, "The Negro Question in the South," in George Tindall, ed. *A Populist Reader* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 125. 126.

9. Robert F. Durden, *The Climax of Populism* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), p. 1 l; Jack Abramowitz, "The Negro in the Populist Movement," in *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. XXXVIII (July l953), p. 270.

10. Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 126; C. Vann Woodward *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1938), pp. 239-371.

11. Herbert Shapiro, "The Populists and the Negro: A Reconsideration," in August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, eds., *The Making of the Black Community*, Vol. II of *The Black Community in Modern America* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 31.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

victims of the crop lien system and of high interests rates as white farmers. African-American farmers needed relief from high railroad rates, decreasing commodity prices, and a more flexible currency which the populists advocated.[12] Watson suggested that new and bold political actions were required by both races in order to break the bonds of a Democratic Party exploiting white fears of "Negro Domination" and a Republican Party manipulating black fears of re-enslavement: "The two races can never act together permanently, harmoniously, beneficially, till each race demonstrates to the other a readiness to leave old party affiliations and to form new ones based upon the profound conviction that, in acting together, both races are seeking new laws which will benefit both. On no other basis under heaven can the 'Negro Question' be solved." Watson believed the People's Party held the solution to the race question by enacting the Australian ballot system, thus avoiding possible retaliation against black voters, by presenting a platform beneficial to both races and by promoting self-interest which would enable both races to support each other.[13] Populist ideology rested on a polarized struggle between monopoly-based wealth residing in the corporations, trusts, railroads and huge landowners, and the innocent and often impoverished masses. Such populist proposals as embodied in the 1897 People's Party Platform as government ownership of the railroads, free and unlimited coinage of silver, postal savings bank, term limits, further restrictions on "undesirable" immigration, and opposition to "any subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any person" were held to benefit the common folk irrespective of race.[14]

Despite populist claims of the commonality of black and white economic interests and their support for the political and legal rights of African-Americans, a closer look at the racial policies of the Southern agrarian movement reveals a failure to repudiate white supremacy and to advocate an egalitarian biracial society in the South. Even the "egalitarianism" at the February 1892 Alliance Convention, involving a black set-aside of 97 seats for the National Colored Alliance, was tainted by the white General Superintendent, R. M. Humphrey, packing the black delegation with white men in violation of the organization's charter in order to

---

12. Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Movement: A Short History of Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 120; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 41-47.

13. Watson, *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 124, 125.

14. "National People's Party Platform" (Omaha Platform, July 1892), in Tindall, ed., *A Populist Reader*, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

obtain the Alliance Convention's endorsement of a third party movement. Blacks were welcome in the agrarian movement so long as they followed the dictates of white mentors such ad Leonidas L. Polk, a North Carolinian and President of the National Farmers Alliance. While pledging that the white Alliance would protect black voters and noting the importance of the blacks to the upcoming election in 1892, Polk nevertheless viewed blacks as a barrier to Southern progress and desired their departure from the South. Polk outlined a plan for the creation of a separate black state in the West, perhaps Texas. Polk's untimely death just prior to the formation of the People's Party at the Omaha Convention in July 1892 dealt a serious blow to separate black state advocates and perhaps to populism in the South.[15] The Omaha Convention's nomination of James Weaver as the People's Party candidate for President demonstrated the reluctance to take an aggressive stand for black rights since in 1890 Weaver had opposed the Lodge Force Bill, which would have created federal machinery to ensure black voting in the South. In 1892, Watson also came out against the Force Bill which the colored Alliance supported and the White Farmers Alliance opposed. Populists were willing to use the powers of the federal government in their agrarian struggle with the "monied interests" of big capital, but not in support of black constitutional rights.[16]

The Southern agrarian movement did not realize its potential because it held to notions of black inferiority, white supremacy, and the racist etiquette of the South's caste system. Organizers for the Colored Alliance had to face white Bourbons and Democrats who opposed fraternization between the white and black Alliances and raised the specter of "Negro Domination." Colored organizers had to work covertly and could not engage in the kind of activities necessary to build their Alliance within the South: "Within the southern caste system, there could be no vast Colored Alliance cooperatives and no public demonstrations of support for such cooperatives, no wagon trains stretching for miles, no spectacular summer encampments — nor any of the other public acts of solidarity that help individual self-respect and collective self-confidence take life among impoverished people."[17]

Democrats played the "race card" most effectively by conjuring up the specter of Black Reconstruction and the mythology of white subordination. One Southern leader proclaimed a populist victory would mean victory for race mongrelism. Alabama Democrats charged that the

15. Gaither, *op. cit.*, pp. 36, 37, 42, 44.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 25; Shapiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 33; Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
17. Gaither, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Colored Alliance in combination with its Northern friends planned to confiscate the lands of white farmers and distribute them to blacks. Under this kind of attack, the fragile commitment to political and legal equality among populists weakened. By 1894, Watson supported segregation laws in public accommodations, opposed black selection for juries and the concept of racial equality, and retreated to an ambivalent stand on lynching.[18]

Unable to combat the collective Southern white memory of Reconstruction as a period of the Africanization of the South and in part subscribing to it themselves, populists began to compete with the Democrats as the champions of white supremacy. Populists had grown bitter and more racist in their attitudes toward blacks as election returns would often show. The Democratic Party won this competition for the hearts and souls of the Southern white electorate with the black population serving as the scapegoat. The institution of the "Mississippi Plan," a combination of revised state constitution and laws utilizing the literacy test and the poll tax to effectively disfranchise the black population, spread throughout the South between 1895 and 1910. Louisiana is typical, as the number of registered black voters declined from 130,334 in 1896 to 1,304 in 1904. The political decline in black voting coincided with the rise of lynching throughout the South. Thus, in Georgia, 241 blacks were lynched between 1888 and 1903; 294 met a similar fate in Mississippi during the same period.[19] The nadir in the post-slavery Afro-American experience had been reached in the South.

Populism failed, in part, because it ignored the racial and economic differences between blacks and whites while focusing only on their common economic interests. To the populists, race was only a distracting device to keep common farmers from uniting. Yet race was much more, for it had provided inter-class cohesiveness in southern white society during and even before the antebellum years. A coalition of blacks who sought more compensation for their labor as tenants and whites who sought more for their products did not share enough in common to transcend the deeply ingrained racial animosities.

---

18. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 31; J. H. Taylor, "Populism and the Disfranchisement in Alabama," in *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. XXXIV (October 1949), pp. 410-427; Robert L. Saunders, "The Transformation of Tom Watson, 1894-1895," in *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LIV (Fall, 1970), p. 350.

19. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, *op. cit*, pp. 647, 68; Clarence Bacote, "Negro Proscriptions, Protests, and Proposed Solutions in Georgia, 1880-1908," in *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. XXV (November, 1959).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

The failure of Reconstruction and populism to establish a more economically and politically democratic society motivated millions of African-Americans to migrate to Northern cities when the opportunity presented itself. Shortages of European immigrant workers led Northern industries and employers to seek Southern black workers. Higher wages, voting rights, educational opportunities and the absence of legal segregation made the North appear very attractive to Southern blacks. This migration provided the critical mass that made Harlem the capital of Afro-America by the 1920s, serving both as the center of the black "Renaissance" in the arts and the headquarters of the largest mass movement of people of African descent in history — Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. In the 1930s, Harlem exhibited a new dynamism, not from a cultural elite nor an Africa-centered mass movement, but through mass activism seeking to redress widespread employment discrimination in the midst of the Depression.

The campaign for jobs in Harlem's 125th Street business district and from the city's major employers was a kind of African-American urban populism for it involved the masses of ordinary Harlemites seeking to expand their economic opportunity by challenging centers of business and corporate power, exalting their own ability to prompt social change, emphasizing their own pathos as one of the most subordinated groups in the history of the nation. In numerous Northern cities, a new generation of black leaders arose, employing mass action tactics of boycotts, picketing, and marches, in a manner that inspired A. Philip Randolph to organize "the March on Washington Movement" in I941 to pressure for jobs in America's growing defense industry. Martin Luther King, Jr. first rose to national prominence leading a boycott against segregation on public transportation in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. King's "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington enshrined him forever in the national consciousness. Looking on was A. Philip Randolph and his lieutenant, Bayard Rustin, the march's organizer. The tactical forerunners of King fought not against legal segregation in the North, but against racial discrimination by municipal governments, corporate power and ghetto-based white businesses which excluded them from meaningful employment. Before the King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, James Farmer and the Congress of Racial Equality, and John Lewis or Stokely Carmichael and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, there was Sufi Abdul Hamid, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and the Reverend William Lloyd Imes in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New York City. Kiowa Costonie led the campaign for jobs in Baltimore, while John Holly and the Future Outlook League led the offensive in Cleveland. In the nation's capital, the New Negro Alliance spearheaded the campaign for jobs, while in Detroit Snow Flake Grigsby and the Civil Rights Committee fought for jobs. These new leaders marked a transition in the development of tactics and goals.[20]

These urban protests during the Depression were the first movements employing direct action techniques seeking community empowerment. They foreshadowed the movements for community control in the late 1960's and early 1970's throughout urban black America. It has become chic to maintain that the depressed socio-economic status of Afro-Americans has been constant, thus to minimize changes or downturns in that status. Nearly three decades later, George Schuyler observed: "The reason why the depression didn't have the impact on the Negroes that it did on the whites was that the Negroes had been in the Depression all the time."[21] If WWI and the migration had ushered in a "New Negro" consciousness in the arts, emphasizing pride in African Heritage and Afro-American identity in the 1920s, that consciousness made itself felt during the hard times of the Depression. Harlem supported Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and A. Philip Randolph as they threatened to boycott American institutions resistant to change. In so doing, Harlem paved the way for their emergence as national leaders in that half-century between the organizational demise of Marcus Garvey in the late 1920s and the emergence of Martin Luther King in the mid-1950s.

The key to understanding the transformation of Harlem's 1920s tolerance of pervasive employment discrimination to a more combative stance is the impact of the depression on Harlem's various social classes. First, the Depression precipitated a decline in social conditions and standard of living. Second, these conditions mobilized the younger less conservative

---

20. E. Franklin Frazier, *Negro Youth at the Crossroads* (Washington: Howard University, 1940); Ira De A. Reid, *The Negro Community of Baltimore* (New York: National Urban League Department of Research, 1935), p. 53; Constance M. Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capitol* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); New Negro Alliance, *New Negro Alliance Yearbook*, 1939 (Washington, D.C., 1939); Ulysses S. Boykin, *Handbook of the Detroit Negro* (Detroit: Associated Press, 1939); Russel Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1972); Gary T. Hunter, "Don't Buy from Where You Can't Work: Black Urban Boycott Movements During the Depression, 1929-1944," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1977).

21. George Schuyler, "The Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1960), p. 232.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

members of the black bourgeoisie, intellectuals and workers to pursue more militant tactics of mass boycotts, mass picketing parades and anti-eviction efforts aimed at ending discrimination and controlling Harlem institutions. Third, the organizational decline of the Garvey movement after his deportation coincided with the earlier onset of depressive conditions in the urban black communities in 1927-28, which shifted the focus of Harlem nationalists away from massive black repatriation to Africa toward domestic inequalities. Fourth, the more aggressive orientation of Harlem's diverse leadership was more the result of tactical radicalization than profound ideological transformation. Black bourgeois leadership desired the integration of blacks into the work force while the nationalists desired ultimately to take control of Harlem's economy. The Communist Party sought converts to interracial working class solidarity and thus opposed any displacement of white workers in order to hire blacks. Fifth, New York, unlike many Northern cities, possessed an ideological, class, and intra-racial ethnic diversity which made it fascinating, but also contained a volatility that could make cooperation among those diverse elements difficult. Sixth, the LaGuardia administration revealed the limitations of liberalism when confronted by intransigent corporate power. While liberal in terms of style, rhetoric and some race issues, Mayor LaGuardia failed to place substantial pressure on the private sector and utilities to end discrimination.

As the Depression deepened in the early 1930s, the pervasive discrimination in New York's corporate sector and utilities, and in 125th Street Harlem business district grew increasingly intolerable. In many Northern cities, black unemployment was nearly double that of whites.[22] Harlem family income declined 44% between 1920 and 1932, while the cost of living index for the state decreased by 17%. The severe impact of the Depression is most evident when contrasted with the 1920s, when black employment was widespread, albeit in low income jobs. The loss of jobs crippled many Harlem families, forcing nearly half (43.2%) on to the relief rolls by September of 1933. Facing the prospect of unemployment and a greatly reduced job market, whites sought previously undesirable

22. Harlem unemployment in the worst period was nearly 60%. In Buffalo, 50.2% of the black male labor force were without jobs in 1930 compared to 34.5% of whites. Unemployment in Cleveland was 52.5% for blacks and 33.5% for whites. The black labor force in Detroit was decimated by the depression, with 60.2% unemployed compared to 32.4% of whites. See *Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 15, 1930; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, 1930: Unemployment, II, pp. 370-373.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

low-paying jobs in the service sector, displacing a significant number of blacks. Black male servants declined by 17.6%, while white ones increased by 15.6%, reversing the trends of previous decades.[23]

Blacks constituted only 4.7% of the city's population in 1930, which proved a weak lever in the effort to improve economic status. By 1935 only 2.7% of New York jobs went to blacks. Blacks were a minute percentage of the employees of transportation companies like the Third Avenue Railway Co. and the Fifth Avenue Coach Co. Similarly black New Yorkers were not to be found among New York Telephone Company's 4,500 Manhattan operators.[24] Prospects for changing these economic realities through biracial political action were limited by the small urban black populations in the North. Populists in the late 19th century South recognized the potential of the large black population to tip the scales in favor of the agrarian reform movement and the People's Party. In the North, however, traditional white politicians had little incentive to address issues of employment discrimination or high rates of black unemployment, nor did their white working class constituency who had a history of job competition and conflict with African-Americans. Black politicians lacked the clout within their own parties to move them to an aggressive anti-discrimination stance and certainly lacked the power to independently challenge public service and private sector employers. A challenge to terrible economic conditions would have to come primarily from the African-American community itself as it groped toward its own form of empowering populism to challenge the urban political and economic elites that ignored their plight.

Because of their tactical conservatism, traditional black middle class civil rights organizations abdicated their responsibility to lead the campaign for black employment in New York. The New York Urban League launched a campaign for jobs in Harlem stores in November, 1926. It did

---

23. Clyde V. Kiser, "Diminishing Family Income in Harlem: A Possible Cause of the Harlem Riot," in *Opportunity*, No. XIII (June 1935), pp. 171-173; The Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, "The Negro in Harlem," *op. cit.*, p. 36. Fiorello LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Record Center, New York City; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population IV, pp. 38, 39; *Ibid.*, Sixteenth Census: 1940, Population, III, pp. 61-64.

24. Osofsky's claim that blacks became an "integral part of city government" and used politics as a "wedge for economic advancement" is not substantiated by municipal employment statistics. See Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*, 1890-1930 (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 177; and Larry A. Greene, "Harlem, The Depression Years: Leadership and Social Conditions," in *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, No. 17 (July 1993), pp. 35, 36.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not utilize boycott or picketing tactics and succeeded in placing only four persons in positions above that of porter or maid. The local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1932 did receive approval from the national office for non-coercive boycotts, which they deemed within the rights of lawful protest. These tactically conservative organizations met with merchants and sought signatures on petitions but they failed to produce significant change. They created a leadership void which was filled by more militant working class — nationalist, militant class integrationist, and leftist.[25]

Sufi Abdul Hamid, alias Bishop Conshankin, the mystical Chicago jobs campaigner surfaced in New York City. He formed the Negro Industrial and Clerical Alliance among disgruntled working class elements in Harlem and began the picketing of merchants not employing blacks in the summer of 1933. In May 1934, he sought larger targets by focusing on 125th Street stores, such as Woolworth's. The justice of Sufi's case and the support he generated in the black community led certain middle class militant Harlemites to form a large umbrella organization, the Citizen's League for Fair Play. The Rev. John H. Johanson, pastor of the prominent St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church, took the lead in the formation of the Citizen's League and was joined by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and William Imes of St. James Presbyterian Church. After L. M. Blumstein department stores refused to hire black clerks, the Citizen's League began picketing and boycotting, which forced the capitulation of Blumstein in August 1934. This ideologically diverse organization had forced Harlem stores to change their discriminatory practices despite the silence of more conservative blacks.[26]

Although committed to race advancement, these groups were tied both ideologically and financially to centers of conservative white power The New York Urban League depended on the goodwill of white employers in their efforts to find jobs for the growing black population. The YWCA was also dependent on the organizational and economic support of the national white-controlled office. The *Amsterdam News* was dependent on the advertisements of those very businesses being boycotted and picketed.

---

25. New York Urban League, "Annual Report: Industrial Department, 1926," *National Urban League Records*, Library of Congress; Andrew Memorandum to Bognall, January 9, 1932, *NAACP Papers*, Library of Congress.

26. *Amsterdam News* (May 26, 1934); *New York Age* (May 26, June 23), (July 7, 14, 21, August 4, 1934); Claude McKay, *Harlem, Negro Metropolis* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1940).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Communist Party objected to the boycott because of a need to recruit among New York's depressed white working class, which feared losing its jobs and to avoid any threat to their concept of interracial working class unity. Even some left-leaning academics, such as Abram Harris, Ralph Bunche, and E. Franklin Frazier, condemned the boycott.[27] Despite the opposition of these people, the first Harlem campaign for increased employment opportunities achieved temporary success.

Internal divisions within the Citizen's League and a successful legal counterattack by Harlem's white private sector resulted in a collapse of the city's first jobs campaign. The Picket committee of the Citizen's League led by ex-Garveyite leaders of the African Patriotic League, Arthur Reid and Ira Kemp, seceded when it became apparent that all the girls hired were light-complexioned and middle class. The working class composition of the Picket committee was highly distressed for they had clocked long hours on the picket line. Citizen League officials and Fred Moore, editor of Harlem's *New York Age*, were responsible for this intra-racial discrimination and it reflected a historical bias of conservative elements of the black bourgeois integrationist elite. The most severe setback occurred when a boycotted store, A. S. Beck, obtained a court injunction prohibiting picketing, as the State Supreme Court ruled in favor of the store's claim that the dispute was not commercial but racial in character. After that, the boycott movement suspended operations from 1935 to 1938. In March 1935, there was a riot against 125th Street store owners. Over half the 400 black personnel hired in 1934 were laid off.[28]

A second more productive jobs campaign was made possible by a US Supreme Court decision in 1938, which allowed for picketing and overturned the New York Supreme Court ruling. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. was joined by A. Philip Randolph, and William Lloyd Imes in the formation of the Greater New York Coordinating Committee. This Committee pressured a stubborn telephone company to integrate its work force by threatening to have a simultaneous mass call-in of Harlemites, thus tying up the city's phone service. Powell's threat to have a regular Tuesday evening black out forced Consolidated Edison to agree to seek a 10% black work-force. Additional victories were won against the subway and bus companies through threatened boycotts and picketing. During the summer of 1938, picketers and marchers blanketed the 125th Street business district. Soon, in August 1938, the Uptown Chamber of Commerce

27. Greene, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
28. *Ibid.* pp. 44, 45.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

agreed to fill their vacancies with blacks until at least one-third of their labor force was black. Through its Harlem Employment Bureau, the Committee placed over one thousand blacks. Perhaps the most nationally recognized success was pressuring the 1939 World's Fair Corporation through picketing and marches to hire African-Americans.[29]

Powell and other activists were victorious the second time around because of the U.S. Supreme Court's favorable decision allowing picketing, but also because they learned the lesson of maintaining unity among such a broad based coalition of some 206 organizations totaling some 155,000 Harlemites. Based on his jobs campaign, Adam Clayton Powell would win election to the New York Council and subsequently to Congress during WWII. Randolph would take his experience with the Coordinating Committee to the national level in the first proposed black march on Washington in 1941 and subsequently for the more famous 1963 March on Washington. The civil rights movement's tactics of boycotts, marches and picketing during the 1950s and 1960s were pioneered in urban black communities across the nation in the 1930s.

In the years following the Depression, African-Americans made significant progress as municipal employment barriers fell in northern cities and white collar employment in the private sector opened in the late 1960s and 1970s. The numbers of black undergraduates increased as did the number of blacks earning graduate degrees in the 1970s. By the 1980s, the 1960s-induced civil rights legislation, War on Poverty programs, and the black urban populist movements had already had their positive socioeconomic impact on African-Americans in a period of an expanding economy. However, during the 1980s the deteriorating manufacturing base, continued decline in unskilled jobs, flight of capital, manufacturing, and jobs to other nations, and a drug epidemic in inner cities contributed significantly to a failing welfare system and family structure.

Ironically, the success achieved by the civil rights movement and earlier black urban populist movements may have contributed to a limited extent to the decline in the quality of black urban life. The suburbanization of the black middle class removed not only the often cited "role models," but also an educated leadership group with a modicum of capital. The "Talented Tenth" of black leadership W.E.B. DuBois maintained as

29. *Ibid.*; Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. *Adam by Adam, The Autobiography of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.*, (New York: Dial Press, 1971), pp. 60-67; *Marching Blacks, An Interpretive History of the Rise of the Common Man* (New York: Dial Press, 1945), pp. 97-101; *New York Age* (May 7, July 16, August 23, 1938, June 13, 1939); Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-285.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

essential for race advancement were now living outside the ghetto. The Harlems of Afro-America had been multi-class communities, but in the post-WWII era they became single class impoverished American versions of the South African homelands. With white flight to the suburbs and urban economies ravaged by shrinking tax bases, constantly increasing social service expenses and rapidly rising health care cost, a new black managerial and political class arose to run the cities at a time of their greatest vulnerability. This new class of the black bourgeoisie often did not live in the inner cities nor did their children go to the inner city public schools. This new class of black politicians, civil servants, preachers and a few corporate types gentrifying a section of the inner city remained relatively untouched by the problem of urban decline.

In the 1980s, Reaganomics posed an alternative to the problems of the liberal welfare state. With supply-side economics, all boats would rise. The benefits of the Reagan tax cut, however, did not trickle down to the ghetto. Major indices of socioeconomic conditions worsened in that decade. There has been a definite increase in income inequality between black and white females during the 1980s with black women earning 92.6% as much as white females in 1980, but only 80.7% in 1990. The ratio of black male income to their white counterparts remained significantly low, with black men earning 60.1% of what white men earned in 1980, increasing to only 60.8% in 1990. The black median family income as a percentage of the white family income had declined from 61.7% in 1972 to 58.0% in 1990. Nearly one-third of African-Americans were below the poverty rate in 1990 as compared to only 10.7% of whites.[30]

In the last twenty years, the average white family has seen its income decline in real dollars. The prospects of a renewed populist alliance of average folks across racial lines to address their common problem is possible. Those proposing to bring the government closer to the people through such anti-elitist measures as term limits, campaign spending limits, anti-bureaucratization and decentralization are on the path to more direct democracy. Many urban blacks would be interested in direct democracy and anti-elitist measures. However, political decentralization without a strategy for economic development would mean turning the responsibilities of government over to localities lacking economic resources.

To gain support in the black community, the new populists must

30. David H. Swinton, "The Economic Status of African Americans: Limited Ownership and Persistent Inequality," in *The State of Black America, 1992* (January 1992), pp. 77-79, 89.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

address not only decentralization, deregulation and debureaucratization, but the manner in which black urban communities can be redeveloped economically. Populists must address the prospects that those who are indifferent to the plight of inner city residents may use the trappings of populist rhetoric in order to dismantle the federal economic lifeline to the cities, without a replacement. Contemporary populists must avoid the errors of their 19th century counterparts and address the racial dimension of economic issues forthrightly with genuine concern for all the constituents in a coalition. 19th century populists did not recognize that the African-American situation was unique and that their general economic prescriptions would not be sufficient for a largely landless subjugated agricultural population. In his classic and prophetic work, Kenneth B. Clark described the urban scene of Harlem and other inner cities more than a quarter of a century ago: "The fact is that in many ways the Negro's situation is deteriorating. The Negro has been left out of the swelling prosperity and social progress of the nation as a whole. He is in danger of becoming a permanent economic proletariat."[31] The urban black populist movements of the 1930s revealed the difficulty, but also the importance and possibility of maintaining unity to bring about social change.

31. Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemnas of Social Power* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 34.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Notes and Commentary:

South of the Border: Mexican Reflections on Distorted Images

Roger Bartra

Ezequiel Martínez Estrada once advised Latin American intellectuals visiting the US always to begin a lecture with a joke. Then one can say anything, no matter how disgusting. I will proceed directly to the disgusting part. Someone once told me the story of a jury in Indiana which, shortly after WWI, took only two minutes to acquit a man who had murdered a stranger for saying: "To hell with the US!" Such an event might also have taken place in Mexico, where a *gachupín* or a *gringo* could have been lynched for saying Mexicans are lazy and useless people. As James Oles has observed, this then can be contrasted with the supposed decay of entrepreneurial capitalism.[1] Europeans once saw Americans as noble savages and the vanguard of human liberty and Western inventiveness, then degraded them to grasping *nouveau riches*, uncultured and unrefined barbarians — an image still widespread among the educated Latin American classes.[2]

Frederika Bremer, a once famous but now forgotten Swedish writer, visited the US in 1849 and, influenced by the failure of the 1848 revolutions, referred to this country as the place "where the people erected the banner of human freedom, declared human rights and the ability to govern themselves," i.e., the "world's greatest governmental culture."[3] To D. H. Lawrence, however, the US did not seem like the land of liberty: "I have never been in any country" he wrote in 1923, "where the individual has such an abject fear of his fellow countrymen. Because, as I say, they are free to lynch him the moment he shows he is not one of them."[4]

---

1. James Oles, "South of the Border: American Artists in Mexico, 1914-1947", in *South of the Border: Mexico in the American Imagination* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).
2. See Hans Kohn's interesting book, *American Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 23.
3. Quoted by Kohn, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.
4. *Studies in Classic American Literature* (London: Heineman, 1964), p. 3.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These mirror images reveal how national identities are formed.[5] Studies of the subject have generated a catalogue of clichés on identity. One image used most often by the Mexican elite is *modernization*. It is an attempt to frame identity within the profile of the new modern man — no longer part of *Latin* America but of *North* America. Modernity allegedly has become the essence of Mexican identity. Porfirio Díaz, who was considered a modern, is criticized in the name of revolutionary and democratic modernity. Revolutionary chaos was brought to order by the centralizing modernity of Plutarco Elías Calles, who in turn was overthrown by the reformism of Lázaro Cárdenas. Later, Miguel Alemán, who wanted to be the most modern of all, introduced an industrial and despotic voracity that was contradicted by the curious modern populism of the 1970s. Currently, technocracy also lays claim to modernity. But "modern policy" as an expression of the official culture has become a postmodern grimace.

Postmodernism is a culture that abandons transcendentalism and views the diverse manifestations of science, politics or art as more or less progressive transfigurations of the spirit of free enterprise and industrial dynamics. The new postmodern culture abandons the search for tendencies and essences as forms of determination of criteria for truth and proclaims the end of authenticity and frontiers.[6] It questions the underlying presuppositions of the different theories and typologies of modernization used to explain what happened south of the border, as well as in the Third World. Today many of these theories seem almost ridiculous. For example, 30 years ago, in their survey of five countries, Almond and Verba concluded that Mexico was a country which, despite enormous problems, enjoyed a democratic system endowed with a great deal of legitimacy, surpassing Italy and even Germany in some respects. Of course, for Almond and Verba, American and English civic culture was the most appropriate for the modern participatory state and representative democracy. This so obviously ethnocentric model was to be transposed to Mexico.[7] But this approach has been stubbornly rejected south of the border and, for this reason, conditions were created for a phenomenon very few analysts considered possible two or three decades ago: after more than half a century of modernity, the Mexican political system has ended up in a *cul–de–sac*. Modern myths, such as national unity, institutionalized revolution, etc., have deteriorated. Many Mexicans now believe the train of modernity has stopped. Yet this disenchantment and delegitimation seems to be precisely what is opening the door to democracy.

---

5. Two studies which canonized American and Mexican national identities were published in 1950: Davis Riesman (with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney), *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); and Enrico Mario Santí, ed., Octavio Paz, *El Laberinto de la Soledad* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1993). For the origin of these works, see Roger Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

6. See Jean–François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

7. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Modernity was what Americans saw or wished to see when they looked southwards. In order to visualize modernity, they had to see a pre-modern paradise or hell in Mexico or Latin America. North American and European visions of Latin America are fascinating. It is entertaining to observe the shadows Western thought casts on the walls of the Mexican equivalent of Plato's cave. There are two recurrent visions: Americans and Europeans think they can see their own *alter ego* in the Latin American mirror in the form of a savage but paradisiacal alternative. What they also see, however, is radical, Oriental otherness.

It is a tragic paradox that Columbus' blindness, the source of all these visions, should still be a revealing metaphor of how the West regards Latin America. Although he always believed he had reached Asia, Columbus projected his European dreams on the lands he was about to conquer. How many Westerners still see Latin America as a Garden of Eden or a land plagued with Asiatic threats? These images have long since been incorporated, criticized and ironically transformed by lengthy discussions on Latin American identity. At the same time, many Latin Americans have reached conclusions similar to those of Derrida's reflections on European problems today: cultural plurality provides the *raison d'être* for identity itself, since "culture cannot be identical to itself. Not that it lacks identity, but it is not possible to identify it."[8] In other words, culture can only be defined in terms of internal differences. That is why cultural identities cannot be recognized without simultaneously invoking the Other. This Other may have very different connotations with negative and malignant undertones. When one looks across the border what one sees is the Other. But since the border is a mirror, this Other turns out to be a reflection of oneself.

The further south one looks, the more darkly reflected and the less attractive becomes the view of Latin America. Western eyes fear the reflection of a desolate world of fragmentation, incoherence, loss of identity, misery, racism, nomadism, mass emigration and corruption. These are not the beautiful ruins of antiquity but those of modernity. They are the ruins of the lost battles of modernity: postmodern ruins. In the Latin American mirror, North Americans and Europeans do not contemplate the past but rather the future. In it they recognize old European evils which have become a threat once again since the fall of the Berlin wall.

When Latin Americans confront the postmodern landscape painted by North American and European thinkers, the impression is one of *déjà vu*, of something already experienced, which writers such as Borges and Fuentes have already described. How do Latin American writers and artists challenge the monopoly of identity? What are the wild animals of the Latin American intellectual jungle fighting over? What cultural wars are being waged in the southern parts of the American continent? It is not difficult to observe the confrontation between two blocks of intellectuals, two cultural territories that occasionally become political

8. Jacques Derrida, *L'Aautre Cap* (Paris: Minuit, 1991).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bastions. Ideological influences have been indirect, complex and contradictory in separating those who want to *retell* history and those who prefer to *read* events.

Julio Cortázar sets beings called "chronopes" against others called "fames."[9] Chronopes are spontaneous, and artistic but congenitally disorganized and impractical people who, however, enjoy life and live it fully. Fames are plodders: prudent, scientific and intelligent, but unimaginative. Both can be personified by well-known figures. Who can fail to recognize García Márquez as a chronope or Octavio Paz as a fame? Chronopy focuses on the moment, while famistics attempt to decipher parallel times. Many Latin Americans think chronopy is left-wing, famistics right-wing. This is obviously an over-simplification. Chronopy is supposedly more closely linked to popular sensibilities, while famistics searches for the reflections of famous names in history. Fortunately, many writers straddle both tendencies and many others are only spectators in this imaginary but bloody battle. This mythological confrontation, which to a certain extent revives the old struggle between nationalists and universalists, encourages what might be called *paramilitary literature*. It comes out of cultural fortresses whose missions are not simply to defend and set boundaries but also to define and attack. It is found in universities and literary sects, cultural magazines and political parties. This ancient Latin American battle also foreshadowed the confrontation between modernists and postmodernists.

In one of these cultural fortresses dwells the Epicurean baroque style, magic realism and chronic barbarity: the postmodern spirit; in the other, the modern, civilized stoicism of Gothic spirits and hieratic symbolism. Obviously, what is barbaric for some is civilized for others. The exaltation of civilization is seen by some as the effect of colonial and imperialist influences. Epicureanism is rejected as vulgar hedonism and Stoicism, in turn, is branded as little more than decadent scorn of worldly tasks. The Epicurean chronicler fears the critical, scholarly, classical and academic eye. Conversely, the structuralist is made uncomfortable by the scorn of the committed and the baroque style of the class struggle.

From the modern Stoics' fortress, reality tends to be regarded as an arena in which forces are annulled. The entire territory is occupied and events are reduced to power relations. From behind the thick fog enveloping the world one has to discover the strong network of meanings defining identity. Only the cement of reality is grey; beyond or deeper lies a powerful and indestructible structure of myths. By contrast, the Epicurean and postmodern chronopes regard the structural subjectivity of myths, archetypes, symbols and heroes as veiled expressions of oppression. Reality is magic and multi-colored, enchanting and poetic: it is necessary to escape from the hateful subjectivity emanating from established state powers and alienating man, to take refuge in the exoticism of a living reality full of promises. Magic reality contains fresh sources of identity.

9. The English translation of these mythological terms is taken from Tim Bishop in *The Saturday Review* (September 27, 1969), p. 26.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These fortresses exert an undeniable attraction. Inside, they provide a comfortable simulacrum of Latin American identity, where exquisite intellectual dishes are served, seasoned with strong political ideas: revolution, democracy, civilization, wealth, pluralism, liberalism, development, popular government and progress. This, however, is a war-zone with various enemy factions, each claiming to embody authentic Latin American identity. In fact, Latin American identity is continuously produced by each of these factions in the very heat of the struggle. Yet both see identity as a sort of permanent, transhistorical, cultural substance occasionally hidden but rediscoverable. Thus both sides regard themselves as *heirs* to this essential Latin American identity.

Is there an age-old continuity in Latin American culture? No! All signs of life of pre-Hispanic societies were eradicated. Today Latin America is irrevocably an extension of the West. The destruction of the indigenous world was consummated. The only remaining survivors of the great disaster are the Indians — reminders that there may be hope for Western civilization to understand the vanished world. Only the full awareness of the deep chasm separating the present from those ancient societies and the painful impression experienced when faced with the Inca, Nahuan or Mayan culture, a deep, dark otherness modernity has been unable to cure, allows some light to break out of the depths of a history whose course was violently interrupted.[10]

If there is no indigenous essence, then the problem of identity can be explored from another perspective: diaspora. Stuart Hall's approach is particularly instructive. He uses the history of Afro-Caribbean people and defines the experience of the black diaspora "not by essence or purity but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity, diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite difference; by *hybridity.* Diaspora identities are those constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference."[11] Only after the collapse of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires were the colonists and their descendants abandoned to a series of metamorphoses characteristic of diaspora experiences like *mestizaje* (there is no exact English translation for this word, meaning mixing of races, hybridization, crossbreeding) with the conquered aborigine population and the enslaved African population. Yet there are drawbacks in applying the idea of diaspora to Latin America. First, it is useless to suggest a return to origins as an alternative. Second, these origins are actually the ancient European metropolis, so a longing for one's origins can become, as it has in Latin America, a conservative attitude from the Catholic and Hispanic Far Right. However, if these derivations are set aside (because in any case they are not very common in Latin America), the idea

10. J. M. G. Le Clézio, *Le Rêve Mexicain ou la Pensée Interrompue* (Paris, Gallimard, 1988).

11. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," in *Framework,* 36, 1989.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a diaspora nation continually metamorphosed into different identities can be enlightening and stimulating. The diaspora that began in the 16th century is still going on today, mainly toward the north, where Latin dispersion is producing — from the Anglo-Saxon perspective — new monsters, i.e., Western men and women who have mutated and in their continuous exile have become Others. Every day there are more Others of this sort all over the world: hybrid beings, children of the most varied diasporas. They are not original and pure, but third-class. The modern cultural metamorphoses produced by diaspora have appeared on a massive scale and most quickly in Latin America

In the US, the "Hispanic" sector in society, economy, politics and culture is enormous and exerts considerable pressure on the American system. Mexican nationalism has traditionally refused to recognize this fact, since this "mexicanization" of American life is seen rather from another perspective: as an "Americanization" of Mexicans. The border is sensed as a constant source of pollution and threats to Mexican identity. The mere existence of the border allows, for the same reason, nationalist passions to remain tense. Needless to say, this is mainly at a symbolic level, since the demographic reality of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans who come and go through the border (more go than come) generates a sociocultural process of *mestizaje* and symbiosis that no nationalism can stop. This cultural process has been defined by Guillermo Gómez Peña as a borderization of the world. From his perspective, the border has stopped being a wound whose pain serves to reaffirm the identity of both Anglos and Latinos. What is usually called an "Americanization" or "Mexicanization" of life near the border is not a specially harmful and dangerous process. When Americans become alarmed with "Mexicanization" of life near the border they exhibit the same conservative impulse of chauvinist Mexicans.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Critical Theory, Sustainable Development and Populism

Emery M. Roe

What is sustainable development? Why is it an issue? What needs to be done? What can be done about it? These questions increasingly preoccupy policy-makers, resource managers and the public. This note parses the four questions through that brand of neo-Adornian Critical Theory often referred to as "the theory of artificial negativity" because of its emphasis on the drive of government to rationalize itself and the dominant ideology by means of internal opposition.[1] Always functionally and sometimes intentionally, bureaucracies engender counter-bureaucracies, each having a vested interest in keeping "opponents" around as a way of perpetuating themselves. These so-called opponents, be they government versus the environmentalists, Left versus Right, or the welfare state versus those who would run it better, are part of the same techno-managerial elite that believes it has the solutions to manage its way out of the increasing complexity of the system. They differ only in terms of the management solutions they propose. Unfortunately, but functionally unsurprisingly, complexity increases as these "solutions" give rise to "counter-solutions," and as bureaucracies give rise to counter-bureaucracies, thereby reinforcing the belief that a techno-managerial elite is all the more "needed" in order to deal with the increasing complexity.

The techno-managerial elite (a.k.a. the New Class) fosters artificial negativity, which in the beginning gives the appearance of opposition, in the process supports the elite, and in the end leads to more and more bureaucratic involution. The answer? A negativity that rises organically outside and in opposition to this increased bureaucratic involution, e.g., populist movements driving a more loosely-coupled federalism than existing versions. Organic negativity is usually generated by an underlying cultural heterogeneity and particularism, and as Piccone puts it, this "cultural heterogeneity is here to stay."[2] Moreover, this heterogeneity

1. Critical Theory means many things, some of which stand in sharp contrast to the neo-Adornian brand articulated in *Telos*. The following analysis relies primarily on the *Telos* version. See Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978) p. 48; "The Crisis of American Conservatism," in *Telos* 74 (Winter 1987/88) p. 6-8; and "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Emergence of Federal Populism," in *Telos* 89 (Fall 1991) pp. 34-35.

2. Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism . . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 17.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and particularity resists New Class attempts to homogenize human beings into conformity, to universalize their problems, to co-opt and centralize their solutions, and thereby to make all individuals abstractly equal. Yet, since organic negativity cannot be managed by a techno-managerial elite (it is outside management and ultimately opposes it), there can be no blueprints for such populism or federalism.

This oversimplified gloss ignores historical roots. It is Piccone's view that the rise and persistence of artificial negativity as a historical phenomenon had much to do with a Cold War whose major "opponents" had a great deal in common and an interest in keeping it going. What ended it was the the collapse of one of the poles as a result, not of US superiority but the USSR's terminal bureaucratic involution. The US itself, however, is now undergoing a similar involution. In this view, the end of the Cold War means a rise in organic negativity, e.g., secessionist and populist movements, as people see through the *ersatz* polarization that kept afloat the bureaucratic behemoths of the Cold War era. Much of this resonates with the arguments of others, such as Marcuse's earlier repressive tolerance or Sinfield's more recent entrapment of ideology or the much discussed micro-management cycles of overregulation leading to under-regulation and to even more overregulation and bureaucratic involution.[3]

The Sustainable Development Debate

Three very eminent environmental scientists, Donald Ludwig, Ray Hilborn and Carl Walters, recently threw considerable cold water on sustainable resource development, i.e., the notion of using resources today in ways that do not foreclose future options to use these resources. They claim exploitation of natural resources at sustainable levels is impossible, scientific claims to the contrary are not to be trusted, therefore the promise of sustainable development makes little policy sense.

3. Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr, and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press 1965). Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1992). Cycles of overregulation and underregulation occur this way: A government (agency, court, legislature) proceeds to adopt more and more regulations to manage what are seen as severe problems. As the number of regulations increase, the regulatory process becomes more time-consuming and the pace of implementing regulations slows down. The slower the implementation and the faster the growth of problems, the more problems appear unregulated. The more underregulation, the greater the pressure on government to micro-manage problems by adopting tougher regulations. But more numerous and stringent regulations slow even further the pace of implementation, and the cycle begins anew. For a sampling of the literature on micromanagement, see: John Mendeloff, "Overregulation, Underregulation, and the Rule-making Dilemma," in his *The Dilemma of Toxic Substance Regulation: How Overregulation Leads to Underregulation at OSHA* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1988), pp. 1- 17; William Gregory, "The Roots of the Problem," in his *The Defense Procurement Mess* (Lexington Books 1989), pp. 1-17; and James Q. Wilson, "The New Micromanagement" and "Schools," in his *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books 1989), pp. 241-244 and 366-368.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In their view, "resources are inevitably overexploited, often to the point of collapse or extinction." Even if it were possible, "sustainable exploitation cannot be achieved without first overexploiting the resource," and then it may well be too late, as "overexploitation is not detectable until it is severe and often irreversible."[4] Their conclusion is especially corrosive, since the authors have been leading researchers on sustainable resource management. "Distrust claims of sustainability," they conclude. If better resource policy is wanted, then we must recognize it cannot be based on such claims: "Political leaders at levels ranging from world summits to local communities base their policies upon a misguided view of the dynamics of resource exploitation. . . . [T]he scientific community has helped to perpetuate the illusion of sustainable development through scientific and technological progress. Resource problems are not really environmental problems: They are human problems . . . ."[5] How they are human problems will become clear in a moment.

The Ludwig et al. article was reported in *The New York Times* and led to a firestorm of responses. This note focuses on the rebuttals from well-known ecologists and experts in the November 1993 volume of *Ecological Applications.* While some respondents agree with points in the original *Science* piece, no response agrees totally, save on the centrality of uncertainty in resource management and the need to bring "human motivation" into that management.

When confronting issues of sustainable development, Ludwig et al. admit they start in the midst of pervasive uncertainty and frequent surprise: "Confront uncertainty. Effective policies are possible under conditions of uncertainty, but they must take uncertainty into account."[6] When uncertainty is ignored, the "consequence of such decision making is a continual series of surprises and failures."[7] So too say the critics. According to one respondent in *Ecological Applications*: "What sustainability does require . . . is attention to the management of systems under uncertainty."[8] "There is therefore an inherent unknowability and unpredictability to sustainable development," concludes another.[9]

"Include human motivation and responses as part of the system to be studied

---

4. Donald Ludwig, Ray Hilborn, and Carl Walters, "Uncertainty, Resource Exploitation, and Conservation: Lessons from History," reprinted in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), pp. 547, 548.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 548, 549.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 549.

7. Ray Hilborn and Donald Ludwig, "The Limits of Applied Ecological Research," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 552.

8. S. Levin, "Science and Sustainability," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), no page number.

9. C. S. Holling, "Investing in Research for Sustainability," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 554. See also Kai Lee, "Greed, Scale Mismatch, and Learning," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 563; Robert Costanza, "Developing Ecological Research That is Relevant for Achieving Sustainability," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 580; and Hal Salwasser, "Sustainability Needs More Than Better Science," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 587.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and managed," adding that the "shortsightedness and greed of humans underlie difficulties in management of resources."[10] Here too the critics agree.[11] They do not concur, however, on some fundamental points. Specifically, the critics believe the management and exploitation of resources at sustainable levels is not only possible but is actually happening. According to Holling, examples from the Everglades of Florida, the forests of New Brunswick, the estuary of Chesapeake Bay, the Great Lakes, and the Baltic Sea demonstrate opportunities for flexibility and innovation in the design of resource policy: "Examples of the new technologies arising from scientific knowledge to satisfy the sustainable use objectives are the 'New Forestry' . . . . and the innovative approaches to 'Biodynamic Agriculture'," in the view of Mooney and Sala. For Rubenstein, "there is at least one 'real world' situation, African grasslands, where it should be possible to manage biotic resources in a sustainable fashion," given existing information. "We maintain," contrary to Ludwig et al., "that the history of fisheries management provides both positive examples of sustainable resource use and lessons for future improvements."[12]

Ludwig et al. are themselves reluctant to concede that management is absolutely impossible. In their view, if resources cannot be managed, needs must be, and what these needs are is quite clear: reduce rapid population growth and excessive use of resources.[13] "Halt human population increase," and "reduce per capita consumption of resources."[14] The attachment to management is also seen in the heading of the second part of the Ludwig et al. article, "Some Principles of Effective Management," albeit the principles (particularly "Distrust claims of sustainability" and "Include human motivation") speak to the difficulty of managing resources and what they see as the necessity of addressing needs directly. They concede it is theoretically possible to manage resources effectively in the face of uncertainty ("There is a well-developed theory of decision-making under uncertainty . . ."); unfortunately, political leaders as well as other ecologists have decided to ignore this and instead base their policies on "the misguided

10. Ludwig, Hilborn and Walters, *op. cit.*, *p.* 548.

11. Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 561; Joy Zedler, "Lessons on Preventing Overexploitation," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 578; see also Levin, *op. cit.*

12. Holling, *op. cit., p.* 554; Harold Mooney and Osvaldo Sala, "Science and Sustainable Use," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 565; D. Rubenstein, "Science and the Pursuit of a Sustainable World," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), pp. 585-586; and A. A. Rosenberg, M. J. Fogarty, M. P. Sissenwine, J. R. Beddington, and J. G. Shepard, "Achieving Sustainable Use of Renewable Resources," in *Science,* Vol. 262 (1993), p. 828.

13. Ludwig, Hilborn and Walters, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

14. Donald Ludwig, "Environmental Sustainability: Magic, Science, and Religion in Natural Resource Management," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 556. Ludwig, of course, is not alone in his view: "Any cause is a lost cause without a reduction in population" (see Louis Pitelka and Frank Pitelka, "Environmental Decision Making: Multidimensional Dilemmas," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 [1993], p. 568).

15. Ludwig, Hilborn and Walters, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

view" of the dynamics of resource exploitation noted earlier.

Differences between Ludwig et al., and their critics over the possibility and practice of resource management are important because management is central to the sustainable development debate. Sustainability has been defined by the Ecological Society of America as "management practices that will not degrade the exploited system or any adjacent systems."[16] All the responses in *Ecological Applications* tie sustainable development to resource management, often in their very first paragraphs.[17]

The debate seems to be primarily over facts. Is it really the case that Chesapeake Bay, the Everglades, or Africa offer management examples or hope for sustainable development as defined?[18] From the viewpoint of Critical Theory such questions are not answered solely or even primarily as matters of fact (though facts matter), because the sustainable development debate is first and foremost one within the ranks of the techno-managerial elite over how to manage — an argument grounded in all sorts of artificial negativities which serve, first, to ratify the belief that New Class management has the answer and, second, to obscure an anti-populist, even imperialist rhetoric of sustainable development advocates who instrumentalize "human motivation" to further a management that is nothing if it cannot homogenize, centralize, universalize and abstractly individualize away the heterogeneity of everything human.

Reformulating the Sustainable Development Debate

Tim Luke neatly describes the New Class aspects of sustainable development.[19] One need only turn to Lester Brown's Worldwatch Institute, a Beltway think-tank preaching sustainable development, to see the New Class at work. For Luke, "the Worldwatch Institute essentially rearticulates the instrumental rationality of resource managerialism on a global scale in a transnationalized register."[20] The Institute's resource managerialism is nothing if not an aspiring New Class domination of the globe as a whole: "Natural resources in the total solar

16. J. Meyer and G. Helfman, "The Ecological Basis of Sustainability," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 569.

17. "No term receives more attention in discussions of environmental management than 'sustainability'. . . ," begins the editor's introduction to the *Ecological Applications* debate (Levin, *op. cit.*).

18. There are ecologists who would, for example, take issue with the proposition that African grasslands can be managed "sustainably." See the "New Range Ecology" discussion in Ian Scoones, *Living With Uncertainty: New Directions in Pastoral Development in Africa* (London: International Institute for Environment and Development 1993).

19. Tim Luke, *Ecocritics and Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy and Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming). For an early discussion of these issues, see the interchange between Barry Commoner and members of the *Telos* group in the section on "The Totally Administered Society," *Telos* 78 (Spring, 1978), pp. 169-184.

20. Luke, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

economy of food stocks, fisheries, forest preserves, and grass lands are rhetorically ripped from Nature by the Worldwatch Institute only to be returned by instituting a worldwatch as 'environmental resources,' enveloped in accounting procedures and encircled by managerial programs. Worldwatching presumes to know how all of this actually works, and in knowing it, to have mastered all its economic/ecological implications."[21]

In this sense and notwithstanding differences, Worldwatch environmentalists and transnational corporations mirror each other in their shared belief that resources have now to be managed worldwide. According to Luke, "these 'new class' worldwatchers are, to put a new twist on a popular Green slogan, very cynically 'thinking globally' and opportunistically 'acting locally' in order to shore up their own political and economic authority by defending the environment, containing waste, and watching the world in ways that suit their use of power so that their clients and consumers, now on a global scale, will remain passive, dependent and powerless."[22]

Advocates of sustainable development differ with others in the New Class only in the sense that they — the sustainable development proponents — see themselves, not the others, as having the answer to how to manage and assemble resources more effectively. In this view, power to manage resources must shift within the New Class away from those who have managed the earth locally and irresponsibly to those who know how to manage it globally and responsibly: "The categories of sustainable development reconstitute Nature — through their recognition of the encirclement of space and matter by a national as well as global economies — as a system of systems that can be dismantled, redesigned, and assembled anew to produce 'resources' efficiently and in adequate amounts when and where needed in the modern marketplace without seeing degradation in carrying capacity. . . . Sustainable development discourse, then, might be re-read as a new power/knowledge formation, aiming at accumulating power for comparatively powerless subnational and supranational agencies [like the UN or Worldwatch Institute] through the mobilization of new knowledges about the performance of essentially national economies and states that have exerted their authority to foster development at any cost."[23]

In this way, sustainable development is a New Class form of artificial negativity, where "opponents" — those for a sustainable earth versus those in the earth-degrading transnational corporations — are really in sync with each other in believing that resources can and must be managed globally. What is left unchallenged in this "opposition" is the corporate destruction of nature running amuck at the sub-global level: "The basic logic of commodification and exchange that animates cases of ecological destruction in the core economies is

21. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 437.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 271-272.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neglected. . . . [For worldwatchers], 'the world' becomes the site of ecological disasters, economic crises, and political challenges rather than the actual bioregions or countries that are the location of these struggles. Worldwatching trips into the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, globalizing what should be national, regional and local struggles over ecology into general planetary problems."[24] As a counterweight and corrective to these global aspirations of New Class domination, Luke recommends an amalgam of ecological populism, communalistic localism and confederal municipalism.[25] It is this organic negativity of "really existing communities," not "sustainable development," that is the greatest threat to New Class resource managerialism, and it is for this reason alone that the globalizing New Class cannot abide the local: "By interposing specialized technical expertise and complex hierarchical organization, which are centered in massive state bureaucracies and transnational networks of corporate production, between the production of most goods and services and their consumption, the New Class disempowers people in their families, neighborhoods, and cities. . . ."[26]

The very same issues are found in the *Science* and *Ecological Applications* debate, only here it is the ecologists who are making New Class claims to managing resources better than others. Rubenstein admonishes that "effective management can only take place when the best available scientific information is used to inform decision-making," adding that "if ecologists really want their scientific knowledge to be taken seriously and to be used in policy making, then ecologists will have to stay involved throughout the decision-making process, from the monitoring of experimental systems to the revising of models."[27] "To be adaptive and contribute to economically and politically effective strategies, science must be integral to the whole management process."[28] The editor of *Ecological Applications* concludes: "What is needed are mechanisms for performing the science that will guide society in making its decisions, and for building bridges between science and decision making."[29] Even when Ludwig et al. doubt such bridges are possible, they in no way doubt that resource management is needed and is theoretically possible.

What seems to be a "debate" between advocates of sustainable development and Ludwig et al. is then no debate at all. Both believe in the need to manage resources and both believe they know how or by what rules these resources should be managed. It is just that They Who Must Be Obeyed disagree over what

---

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229. See also the discussion on "analytic tip" in Emery Roe, *Narrative Policy Analysis* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 1994).
25. Luke, *op. cit.*, Chapter 10.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 45
27. Rubenstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 585, 586.
28. Salwasser, *op. cit.*, p. 588.
29. Levin, *op. cit.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those specific rules are. There is a palpable sense in which not only is the sustainable development debate an artificial negativity that reinforces the domination of the techno-manage-rial elite, but also that the complaints of the ecologists (they are too rarely consulted; science cannot remain neutral) is itself an artificial negativity that never questions the more basic issue: What are the alternatives to New Class resource managerialism?

To see the artificial negativity at work, consider the differences between an ecologist and a critical theorist. When the ecologist, C.S. Holling, says, "The [key environmental] problems are essentially systems problems where aspects of behavior are complex and unpredictable. . . *Therefore, interdisciplinary and integrated modes of inquiry are needed for understanding. And understanding (not complete explanation) is needed to inform policies. . . .*,"[30] his "Therefore" is a New Class deduction, focused exclusively on the management issue of making better policy. Critical theorists would follow the first sentence with a very different "therefore," as in: "Therefore, the pressure on localities to secede or otherwise decouple themselves from this system complexity is always immanent, if not imminent, and must be recognized as such." Consider also what an ecologist and a critical theorist would say is the core environmental question. "How modern societies can live and prosper 'sustainably' on the planet is *the* greatest challenge facing humankind and ecology is essential to addressing this challenge."[31] Put so baldly, one can readily agree to the first half of the sentence, even if turning a blind eye to the New Class implications of the second half. Not so for Piccone. Rather, "the projects of decentralization, de-bureaucratization, or re-empowering of individuals and communities in order to allow a minimum of self-determination concerning life-style, culture and identity, are some of the most important, if not *the* most important political issue of today."[32]

The real threat to the New Class is that these communities, if left on their own, would use their "resources unsustainably" and that no one in the New Class could stop them from doing so. Populism and communities surface in the pages of *Science* and *Ecological Applications* only in two ways: either as the greed and shortsightedness roundly criticized by all or as the "stakeholders" in a "bottom-up rather than top-down" management process with "long-run rather than short-run priorities" operating according to "ecologically-sound principles."[33] Human motivation has to be instrumentalized if it is to matter at all. In New Class-speak, the management problem is to incorporate "the human

30. C. S. Holling, *op. cit.*, p. 554; italics in the original.

31. M. Mangel, R. Hofman, E. Norse, and J. Twiss, Jr., "Sustainability and Ecological Research," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 573.

32. Paul Piccone, "The Crisis in American Conservatism," *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

33. See, for example, Harold Mooney and Osvaldo Sala, *op. cit.*, M. Mangel *et al, op. cit.*, and Paul Ehrlich and Gretchen Daily, "Science and Management of Natural Resources," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dimension" into an ecologically-informed decision-making.[34]

As such, the *bête noire* of sustainable development proponents — "unregulated growth" or "unfettered resource exploitation"[35] — is itself a smokescreen of artificial negativity obscuring the organic. The artificial negativity is the notion that economic growth and resource exploitation are the only problem, while the real choker are those adjectives "unfettered" and "unregulated," the markers for all that is unmanageable and outside the control of anyone in the New Class. The notion that people, in their own communities or through populist movements, do what they want with and to their "environment" regardless of what transnational corporations and the environmental worldwatchers dictate threatens *both* the New Class advocates and detractors of sustainable development.

In organic negativity, the New Class has no control over those communities which on the basis of their own culture and traditions "overgraze," "overutilize," and "overexploit their resources." Charges of greed and shortsightedness, like those of encouraging nationalist strife, are New Class ways of silencing populism without a hearing. What one *Ecological Applications* respondent calls "strong cultural beliefs" and another "strong tribal structure"[36] are o.k. for the New Class — as long as they lead to "sound" resource management. When they do not promote such management, the practices are said to run counter to "common sense" and, heaven forbid, "the scientific method."[37]

Read this way, statements New Class ecologists make — in nature, everything is connected; nature needs better managing — acquire a decidedly anti-populist, even persecutory resonance. According to ecologists, a much more holistic, global systems perspective to development is needed, one that recognizes the high interdependence and connection between all things.[38] From outside the New Class perspective, such positions look decidedly imperialistic in their management aspirations, colonizing the lifeworld with globalizing New Class claims to panoptic expertise and insight.

Look too at that New Class mantra, "need." While the vocabulary of needs is difficult to avoid, even in a critique such as this, it is always New Class elites who

---

34. See, for example, J. Meyer and G. Helfman, op. *cit., p.* 570. "Include human motivation by developing linkages with the social sciences, particularly economics, to develop a comprehensive transdisciplinary synthesis," is how Costanza *(op. cit., p.* 580) puts what is a wonderful, albeit unintentional, illustration of New Class artificial negativity at work — as if one major problem with resource managerialism is linking human motivation to the social sciences!

35. Respectively, M. Mangel *et al, op. cit., p.* 574; J. Meyer and G. Helfman, *op. cit.*, p. 569.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 573; and p. 569.

37. See, for example, Joy Zedler, *op. cit., p.* 578; Robert Costanza, *op. cit.*, p. 580.

38. See J. Meyer and G. Helfman, *op. cit.*, p. 570; L. B. Slobodkin, "Scientific Goals Require Literal Empirical Assumptions," in *Ecological Applications,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993), p. 572.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

persistently talk in terms of "needs" that have to be filled and their knowledge about how to fill them. Needs assessment is the worst kind of artificial negativity created by the New Class, whereby people are supposed to believe they are all alike in having "basic human needs," that there are always more needs than can be met, and that only the New Class can help them to meet those needs that can be met. It would seem that the techno-managerial elite alone has the diagnostic credentials to manage the therapeutic society.[39] And what better way to create needs requiring the New Class than by manufacturing them through a global, holistic systems approach which all but guarantees that even where local needs are met, rarely are global ones. Development can be a local success and still a system failure, if parsed through an approach that insists the local always provides little, if any leverage, in correcting what the New Class defines as global problems.[40]

Populism rejects this interconnection and complexity and is itself a rejection of New Class claims to needs assessment. People do not "need" organic negativity; they are it. In organic negativity, people have abilities they manage on their own; in artificial negativity, people have needs that have to be met through outside managers. In populism, it is culture, tradition and particularity that matter; in the New Class, the only gurus are management gurus.

Thus, from a populist perspective, statements like "Halt population growth," "Reduce per capita consumption," and "Any cause is a lost cause without a reduction in population" assume a persecutory character in their ambition to homogenize heterogeneous peoples into a mass population, universalize their problems into the staccato "Reduce! Reduce! Reduce!" and abstractly individualize people into all manner of "per capita." Organic negativity will have none of this. Only at the community level or in a populist movement, where abilities are defined locally and vary widely, is it really possible to understand just how mindless are conformity recommendations like "halt" and "reduce."[41] Halt population growth or reduce per capita consumption is not nor could ever be *the* answer for really existing communities.

By now the environmentally-friendly reader will be climbing the wall — ecologists and sustainable development advocates as "persecutory"? "anti-populist"!? "imperialist"??!! The reader fulminates, "Do you really believe in this conspiracy theory? They're the good guys, after all! For that matter, just what do you propose for a world that is destroying the environment . . ."

This critique is largely functionalist, rarely intentionalist. Of course, lawyers from a bureaucratic EPA, when confronting lawyers from a bureaucratic NRDC

---

39. L. B. Slobodkin, *op. cit.*, p. 572. 41 Emery Roe, *op. cit.*

40. Roe, *op. cit.*

41. Robert Solow, the Nobel economist, captures this persecutory tone when, in his discussion of sustainable development, he complains that "there is something faintly phony about deep concern for the future combined with callousness about the state of the world today" (quoted in Levin, *op. cit.).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mediated by a bureaucratic court system, rarely see themselves in a conspiracy to keep the New Class bureaucracy in power. Of course, ecologists are not deliberately conspiring with decision-makers who have excluded them from the decision-making loop.[42] Of course, applied scientists often have problems with those who preach the gospel according to basic science only.[43] In each case, the principals can be expected to see themselves in adversarial terms. Yet in each case, that polarization is artificial in functional terms, because the underlying game being played — resource managerialism on a transnational scale — is never in question among the "adversaries" concerned.

What is never in doubt is a resource managerialism whose principles are that resources can be managed by experts who know what the real needs are, that this expert management matters for decision-making, and that the experts involved should be grounded in science and engineering. Except for Luke's critique, what has been missing in the sustainable development debate so far (and not just in the pages of *Science* or *Ecological Applications*) has been the populist critique of resource managerialism itself, namely: Management categories, like "resources" and "the environment," are an ultimately self-serving and reinforcing creation of the experts; even where such categories have real referents, communities do not "need" outside experts to manage the resources; moreover, expert management does not matter as much as local control over these "resources" or "the environment," and certainly there is no reason to privilege or elevate science and engineers in *any* of that local control.

A populist critique of the "debate" between sustainable development and its detractors, like Ludwig et al., insists that what is really going on in this so-called controversy is New Class experts jockeying among themselves in claiming rights to stewardship over land and resources they do not own. By generating and participating in such a debate, technical experts and managers assert rights as equal (instrumentalizing) "stakeholders" in the land and resources they say are not being managed sustainably. Working on the assumption that those who sustain resources are the best stewards of those resources, the experts make a twofold claim, i.e., not only are insiders, specifically local residents and communities, not stewarding their resources, but those who really know how to sustain those resources are outsiders, specifically the experts and professionally-trained resource managers. Accordingly, so this argument goes, local people are in need of the stewardship of systems-oriented techno-managerial elites, be they experts in governments, international donor agencies, or transnational non-governmental organizations.[44]

"Wait a minute," the fulminating reader persists, "it is precisely because of

---

42. See, for example, Louis Pitelka and Frank Pitelka, *op. cit.*; Rubenstein, *op. cit.*
43. For example, Hal Salwasser, *op. cit.*
44. For more, see Emery Roe, "Except-Africa," in *World Development, Vol.* 23, No. 6 (1995).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

local actions that we need global remedies. It is because people are polluting and destroying resources locally and regionally that we have such problems as climate change requiring global remedies now! All you are recommending is more of the same that got us in the environmental mess we are today. . . ." If one believes that, then that belief raises an empirically and logically prior question which must first be answered: What reason is there to believe that if one tries — and fails — locally, regionally, and nationally to reduce, e.g., CO2 emissions, there will be more success globally? Can one actually believe, after four decades of trying to transfer technology and institutional arrangements from parts of the developed to the developing world, that there will be fewer failures when transferring even more complex technologies and arrangements across altogether wider tracts of the planet to address putatively global problems like climate warming? There are already considerable grounds for reducing CO2 emissions in the US without waiting to settle the global technology transfer problem or the issue of whether or not global warming is actually occurring.[45] Indeed, the opposite argument is more plausible. If communities knew they only had access to finite resources falling within their territory or by arrangement with other communities, each community would then be under more pressure to manage them better, assuming they see their world divided into categories like resources and the environment. If they do not manage them effectively, no one can. It is precisely that principle which has motivated the organic negativity of populist movements. As Piccone notes, the populism at issue here is "federal populism." Communities whose organic negativity leads to expansionism, e.g., having exhausted their land, they now rise up to seize their neighbors' land, would be restrained by a loose confederation of the heterogeneous communities, which would act in concert only under such or similar provocation.[46]

Back to the Four Questions

The four questions that started this note can now be answered. From a Critical Theory perspective, "*What is sustainable development?*" It is a New Class version of resource managerialism that functionally serves to globalize and perpetuate the techno-managerial elite's control over everyday life. While opposed to standard economic growth prescriptions, sustainable development is really artificial negativity that leaves untouched the issue of whether or not New Class resource managerialism is appropriate at all. "*Why is it an issue?*" The New Class' older versions of resource management, such as economic growth and transnational exploitation, have come under increasing criticism, complexity and uncertainty, such that they now must be augmented and/or replaced by newer, aspiring versions of resource management under the expert control of techno-

45. Global warming is discussed in Roe, *Narrative Policy Analysis*, *op. cit.*

46. Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism. . . , *op. cit.*; and Robert D'Amico and Paul Piccone, "Introduction," in *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

managerial elites. "*What needs to be done?*" Nothing. Ideally, organic negativity would eliminate the "need" for New Class domination, in particular resource management and its progeny, including sustainable development. "*But what can actually be done about it?*" Protect really existing communities which seek control of their own territories. Promote a loose federal arrangement predicated on heterogeneous communities, each with the right to secede from this confederation but having no right to usurp others. Do not be deluded into thinking in terms of Left or Right, as they both operate according to New Class principles. Give populism a chance.

It would be fairly simple to end this note with the preceding paragraph. The analysis will have contained a few surprises for populists, while others might find it all unsettling and to be faulted on several grounds, e.g., the above also runs the risk of homogenizing, universalizing and abstractly individualizing, in this case the New Class and communities. Such observations, however, do not substantially undermine the critique.

Oddly enough, though, the sustainable development debate does have direct bearing on Critical Theory itself, and in an important way. To see this, return to Luke's analysis of sustainable development. Certainly not alone in his view, Luke believes there is nothing like an "unmanaged" or "untouched and totally wild" nature out there. Human beings have interfered and will continue to do so in a "Nature" that is better thought as constructed rather than preexisting. Even if the interference were one simply of fencing off a so-called "wilderness area" so it would remain untouched by human hands, that very act of fencing off and preserving is itself no less a kind of management.

Yet, if that view is true, then does the same hold for the relation between federalism and the organic communities those federal arrangements are meant to protect? If the role of federalism is, as Piccone has insisted on a number of occasions,[47] to *protect* really existing communities from encroachment by New Class outsiders, then is not that very act a kind of management no less interventionist than what is going on today? More to the point, unlike wilderness areas totally devoid of human beings, these protected communities would be populated by really existing people whose many activities would include management of, if not resources, certainly their territories.[48]

Conversely, if it is the case that strong communities give rise to and remain strong under a minimalist federalist management umbrella, then the implication

47. *Ibid.*

48. See Piccone ("The Crisis of Liberalism. . . ," *op. cit.*, pp. 38ff) on the importance of territory to organically constituted communities. For a criticism of Piccone's notion of community, see Louise Fortmann and Emery Roe, "On Really Existing Communities — Organic or Otherwise," in *Telos* 95 (1993). For a very Picconesque argument about the difference between community and management, but from a very different source, see Robert Post, *Constitutional Domains: Democracy, Community, Management* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), especially pp. 3-15

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is that true wilderness areas can and do remain on this planet, even where the manager's strategy is one of hands-off management of these "resources," whether out of respect for and in awe of that resource or through the resource's physical inaccessibility and remoteness to current human intervention. But if all management is New Class management, then it is difficult to see how protected communities are any less "managed" by the New Class than penetrated ones, whether out of respect for and in awe of organic communities or through the inaccessibility and remoteness of organic communities to current New Class intervention. If the latter is true, then Luke's observation that areas protected by the likes of the nature conservancy are really nature's cemetery (i.e., a reminder of a Nature long dead), then too, strong communities, even under a loose federal structure, run the risk of being the tombstones for an organic negativity and populism equally dead in the wider scheme of things.

new political science

Issue #33/34 -- ***Contemporary British Politics***
Chris Toulouse and Kent Worcester, editors

Chris Howell, *Turning to the State: Thatcherism and the Crisis of British Trade Unionism;* Robert Geyer, *Globalization and the Crisis of Social Democracy;* Robin Melville, *From Anti-Thatcherism to Post-Thatcherism: Contemporary Scottish Politics and its Sources;* John Kurt Jacobsen, *British Ulster: Is Peace a Rational Choice?* Jill Simone Gross, *British Local Government Reform: The Demise of Local Democracy;* Chris Toulouse, *The Lessons of the Poll Tax;* Anthony Barker, *Major's Government in a Major Key;* C.J. Stone, *Party Politics.*

Send with check for U.S. funds payable to "NPS" to New Political Science, Dept. R, c/o Government Department, Suffolk University, Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2770, U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Every Man a Sultan: Indigenous Responses to the Somalia Crisis

Jesse Walker

In 1910, a British colonial official travelling through what is now Somalia asked an African companion who the people he saw around him were. "Somalis," replied the African: "They no good; each man his own sultan."[1] In most media accounts of the Somalia crisis, the idea individualistic Somalis are "no good," at least in so far as governing themselves is concerned, has been a recurring theme. This was the ultimate rationale for Operation Restore Hope. In the chaos of clan warfare, it was argued, only an external power could restore order. A gritty picture was painted of maniacal gangsters killing each other (and everyone else) in the streets of Mogadishu, stealing eight-tenths of the food shipped in by relief workers, eradicating all civic order. It seemed as though the UN would have to build a new social infrastructure from scratch.

In fact, the rampaging terrorists, while real, were fallout from past international intervention in the region. Far from the helpless victims portrayed on TV, ordinary Somalis actually were engaged in a phenomenal self-help effort. Outside the southwestern corridor from Mogadishu to Baidoa and Kismayu, the country was "relatively peaceful and well-governed by an alliance of traditional elders and local leaders that has reemerged in the wake of the collapse of central authority."[2] In 1993, in the secessionist northern republic of Somaliland, traditional leaders arbitrated a landmark peace settlement, despite a weak, corrupt government and a complete absence of UN troops. Meanwhile, the UN has proven itself capable of its own blunders and brutalities.

Altogether, the Operation Restore Hope was little more than the latest chapter in a long history of paternalistic intervention in Somali society. From the old British and Italian colonialists to the modern aid establishment, outsiders have failed repeatedly to appreciate the capabilities of Somalia's indigenous institutions; indeed have worked against them. The result has been decades of disorder.

Planned Chaos

When Westerners first came to Somalia, they brought with them a set of

1. Said Samatar, "The Politics of Poetry," in *Africa Report* (Sept./Oct. 1993).
2. Said Samatar, "How to Save Starving Somalia," in *Manchester Guardian* (December 3, 1992).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

economic assumptions that got in the way of understanding Somali society. Their economic models favored sedentary living, though the Somali desert did not; time after time, they refused to admit pastoralists' real contributions to the Somali economy. These resumptions were reflected in the Glover report, released in 1947 by the British Somaliland Protectorate, according to which Somalia's agricultural and range land were overutilized; communal ownership, overcommercialization, and pastoral ignorance were blamed. Three major premise were formulated: (1) as a system of land tenure, communal ownership is environmentally damaging; (2) as a system of land use, nomadic pastoralism is unproductive and static; and (3) traditional institutions, where they exist, are inefficient and outmoded and encourage inequalities."[3] All were incorrect. The first, a misunderstanding of what Garret Hardin would later call the "tragedy of the commons," is an accurate description of what happens when property rights are ill-defined. But the Somalis did, in fact, have strictly defined use rights and rules of resource consumption. Common ownership had evolved as a rational response to the arid landscape, and reflected a certain degree of environmental wisdom, not degradation.[4] Contrary to the stereotype of the unproductive, static nomadic economy, Somalia's herders have been successful and innovative to this day. Indeed, before the current chaos, Somalia was the number two sheep and goat exporter in the world.[5] Where it was economically appropriate, Somalis did engage in agriculture — with more success, ironically, *before* the onset of attempts to "encourage" farming. "Outmoded" traditional institutions have proven far more able to adapt to changing circumstances than the ever-crumbling political institutions imposed from without.

Political independence did not lead to a more independent approach to social organization; if anything, the situation grew worse, especially after October 1969, when Major General Mohammed Siad Barre overthrew Somalia's elected government and began two decades of dictatorial rule. Barre's régime was a notorious violator of human rights, responsible for tens of thousands of deaths, institutionalized torture, and ruthless suppression of dissent. The most quintessentially totalitarian policy of the Barre government was its deliberate attempt to destroy all authorities and associations outside the state. The intention, in the words of one Somali human-rights activist, was "to dismantle the institutions that allowed people to articulate their grievances and that provided a framework for the resolution of conflict."[6]

Barre initially aligned his government with the Soviet bloc, implementing

---

3. Susan Gunn, "Somalia," in John P. Powelson and Richard Stock, *The Peasant Betrayed*, 2nd ed. (Washington: Cato Institute, 1990), p. 147.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. Rakiya Omaar, quoted in James Ridgeway, "From the People Who Brought You Desert Storm," in *The Village Voice* (December 15, 1992).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quasi-Marxist policies and raking in military and economic aid. In 1975, the central government expropriated all the land in the country and did its best to force nomads to join its official cooperatives or to become farmers. Many rationales were offered for the continued anti-pastoralism, but the core reasons were best expressed by former USAID food monitor Michael Maren: "African leaders like to settle nomads. Nomads make it hard to build a modern state, and even harder to build a socialist state. Nomads can't be taxed, they can't be drafted, and they can't be controlled. They also can't be used to attract any foreign aid, unless you can get them to stay in one place. In addition, many African leaders, in an attempt to be modern, view nomads as an embarrassment and a nuisance. From Bamako to Nairobi I've listened to Africa's élite discuss nomads as if they were vermin. They'd rather have their countries symbolized by gaudy, foreign-built hotels than by poorly clothed people with cattle."[7]

Barre invaded Ethiopia in 1977. When the Soviet Union switched to the Ethiopian side, he moved Somalia into the West's orbit. His country lost the war, but by 1982 it was one of Africa's largest recipients of U.S. economic and military aid, receiving over $600 million over the 1980s. That shift in loyalties also brought a shift in rhetoric, but Barre's "capitalism" was no more open to voluntary initiative than his "socialism" had been. Indeed, the extension of government power at the expense of the grass roots continued, with the US taxpayer helping to foot the bill.

As the 1980s progressed, many ethnic Somalis began fleeing Ethiopia for Somalia, providing Barre with another opportunity to demand aid from his benefactors. They obliged. Barre's government inflated the number of refugees entering his country by at least a half million. The extra food aid was then diverted, some to the local marketplace by thieving officials, some to the army to ration its sporadic attacks on Ethiopia. These attacks, in turn, provoked the Ethiopian government to more reprisals against ethnic Somalis, refueling calls for aid to feed the growing refugee population.

An important effect of this was to alter the economic incentives Somalis faced. Nomads who had in the past turned during droughts to the clan system's intricate mutual aid networks could now go to the camps instead. This created some severe public health problems — habits appropriate to dispersed desert life became death sentences in the crowded, disease-ridden camps — in addition to eroding the indigenous economy.

Nonetheless, the Somali people continued to innovate and adjust: "Neither the Western nor the socialist methods of land reform turned out as planned. Western range conservation projects hastened the destruction of the environment; socialist-style land reform contributed to class formation and stengthened the economic and political statuses of élites. Both committed those who hold land by

7. Michael Maren, "Manna from Heaven? Somalia Pays the Price for Years of Aid," in *The Village Voice (*January 19, 1993).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communal right to more and more precarious conditions. And all advisors, regardless of their political complexion, shook their heads over the lack of initiative and uninspired demeanor of their Somali co-workers. Meanwhile in the north, the wealthy livestock owners were elaborating new ways of shipping livestock, investigating the domestication of incense trees, experimenting with paddock-held camels, and diversifying into frozen-fish processing. The poorer livestock owners were joining religious communities that guaranteed food, shelter, and education, or were banding together in loose associations to try mixed farming in new areas. Some placed their families in refugee camps while they went off to build up a survival-size herd. In the south, the wealthy farmers were buying pumps and pesticides from Kenya, while their poorer kin worked for them, for a short time, at wages twice those of government clerks. Those between the two extremes continued as they had for years — diversified — their family members parcelled out into every occupation that the Indian Ocean littoral could afford. The view from the bottom — of a society that is vigorous, opportunistic, and aggressive — is totally different from that at the top, where, in the minds of Somali administrators and foreign development agents, the pastoralist is desperately poor, lethargic, and helpless. Tragically, it is the 'helpless' view that the world sees, and the only one it will respond to."[8]

Clan Wars

Ultimately, Barre's régime was a kleptocracy, and despite all the dictator's attempts to wipe out older loyalties, who got to steal from whom often depended on what subclan one belonged to. Thus it was possible, in 1988, for a traditional leader of the Rahenweyn subclan to describe his relation to Barre's Marehan clan as "total war." By his estimate, "more than half of the fertile riverain land once farmed by his people had been seized, much of it at gunpoint."[9] Much of this sort of expropriation actually was sanctioned by the international aid community as "development."[10] When, after two years of outright civil war, Barre was ousted in early 1991, this fighting along clan and subclan lines continued, wreaking devastation upon the country. It would be easy for an observer to conclude that Somalia's traditional institutions were working against peace.

But Somali society is an ever-shifting sea of countervailing forces, some driving people apart, some bringing them together. On the one hand, there is the system of lineage segmentation, which Samatar has illustrated by quoting a Bedouin: "My brother and I against my half-brother, my brother and I against my father, my father's household against my uncle's household, our two households . . . against the rest of the immediate kin, the immediate kin against non-immediate members of the clan, my clan against other clans, and, finally,

8. Gunn, *op. cit.*

9. Alex de Waal and Rakiya Omaar, "Somalia: Adding 'Humanitarian Intervention' to the U.S. Arsenal," in *Covert Action Quarterly* (Spring 1993).

10. *Ibid.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my nation and I against the world!"[11] On the other hand, there are the unifying forces of the clan elders; the *heerbeegti* legal experts who arbitrated within and between clans; and poetry and music, which play an important role in Somali society.[12] Even as warlords such as Mohammed Farrah Aidid and Ali Mahdi Mohammed exploited kin loyalties to fire their terrorist rampages, the bulk of the Somali people turned to indigenous institutions (including clan ties) to survive. The warlords combined the worst elements of Somali and non-Somali society: former bureaucrats who used traditional loyalties to try to seize a very *un*traditional power structure. In the meantime, a much more benign remnant of the old Somalia began to work for peace and relief.

Somaliland's Example

The most successful example of indigenous peace-making occurred in the Republic of Somaliland, the once-British northern part of the country, which seceded in May 1991. At first, it seemed as though the breakaway nation would escape almost entirely the chaos wracking the Somali southwest. "Despite the reluctance of foreign governments to recognize Somaliland, the poor response by the international community in providing assistance, the absence of a strong central authority, the lack of functioning administrative structures, the collapse of infrastructure, and the shortage of experienced administrators, the economy took off and spirits were high. Visitors commented on the relative security. The port of Berbera, the economic nerve-center of the region, was bustling, importing building materials, essential foodstuffs, and exporting livestock."[13] One early press report gives the flavor of the young republic's hopes: "A host of non-governmental organizations have returned to assist with the reconstruction of Somaliland. Health services are being resurrected. Work is underway to repair the main water supply, which was deliberately wrecked during the war. Stormwater drains are being cleared. Roofs are being replaced. . . . [President] Abdirahman says that despite the lack of any international recognition for Somaliland so far, there will be no reunion with the rest of Somalia. 'All the countries in the Horn of Africa could establish economic cooperation and work together in many fields. But we want two separate sovereign Somali states. Somaliland is here to stay, and as far as we're concerned, there's no going back on that'."[14]

The peace was not to last. On January 12, 1992, against the backdrop of a disorganized, incompetent government beset with petty squabbles, fighting broke out in the city of Burao between the Habr Yuni and Habr Jelo militias. It ended only with the intervention of traditional elders, risking their own lives with no assistance from the Somaliland government. Violence again broke out

11. Samatar, "The Politics of Poetry," *op. cit.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Rakiya Omaar, "The Best Hope for Peace," in *Africa Report (*May/June 1993).
14. Peter Biles, "Going it Alone," in *Africa Report* (January/February 1992).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in March, this time between the Habr Yunis and the Isse Muse. The government actively encouraged the fighting. President Abdirahman Tour bore ultimate responsibility for engineering the war, having initially ordered his fellow Habr Yunis to seize Berbera; other government officials used the conflict as a means of settling political scores.[15]

From the verge of social collapse, Somaliland's clan elders began a delicate and sophisticated shuttle-diplomacy, starting at the most local levels and working their way up to the whole nation. The mediators "used poetry, proverbs, and precedents to debate for 17 days in time-honored tradition, finally embracing in emotional reconciliation."[16] The elders also made a special effort to publicize widely the agreement, so no one could exploit popular ignorance of the reconciliation; arranged for the release of prisoners of war; took over responsibility for maintaining security; and arranged a congress in which President Abdirahman and his ministers would be made to answer for their actions. Abdirahman and his foreign minister were not present at the truce or even in the country at the time. The UN, rather than supporting the agreement, almost derailed the process by announcing its intentions to send military forces into Somaliland.

UN Failures /Grassroots Successes

If the Somalis have not been playing their allotted parts as helpless victims, neither has the UN excelled at governance in the Somalis' stead. Indeed, the international organization blew the best chance for peace shortly before the multilateral intervention, when it fired envoy Mohammed Sahnoun.

Prior to Sahnoun's appointment, the UN had done its best to ignore the Somali civil war. Thus, for example, when Ali Mahdi's faction requested a special session of the General Assembly to deal with the conflict, Undersecretary General for Special Political Questions James Jonah refused: "The consensus of views here is that it is most unlikely that the General Assembly could accept the convening of a special session . . . . We would suggest that you endeavor to discourage at the local level any idea for holding a special session on Somalia."[17] The UN also refused to support regional peace efforts. When Djibouti brought representatives of each major clan to a reconciliation conference, the UN would not participate. When Eritrea offered to send a peace-keeping force into Somalia in 1992, it managed to get the agreement of both Ali Mahdi and Farrah Aidid but not the UN.

When Mohammed Sahnoun was appointed special envoy to Somalia in April 1992, he inherited a post no longer respected by the majority of the Somali people. The U.N. bureaucracy was far removed from the experience of ordinary

15. Omaar, "The Best Hope for Peace"; Stephen Sheppard, "Somaliland Clans Bury the Hatchet," in *New African (*January 1993).

16. Shepperd, *op. cit.*

17. Quoted in Ray Bonner, "Why We Went," in *Mother Jones (*March/April 1993).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Somalis; Sahnoun was the first envoy in recent memory to actually live in Mogadishu. He quickly began to talk with representatives of all the major warring factions, with civic associations, and ordinary citizens, down to schoolboys on the street. For once, the UN was taking a grassroots approach to the Somalia mess, trying to understand Somali society from the bottom up. Sahnoun was free with his criticisms of the UN's past performance. "If [the UN] is not able to operate quickly and you're not able to find people to go into the problem areas quickly, let's support" non-governmental organizations, he told the *Washington Post.* "Save the Children has done much better than the UN"[18]

Despite his successes, Sahnoun was fired for his public criticism of his employer and for his frequent "unauthorized" (but undeniably useful) trips. Meanwhile, the UN's operation was riddled with incompetence and corruption. Refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia saw thousands dying for simple, preventable reasons. In one incident, a simple well and pump that could have significantly increased the drinking water available was delayed for months while officials haggled with the building contractor. The borehole could have been built in just two days.[19] By the time UN troops came ashore the Indian Ocean beach, the prime killer was not starvation or violence but disease, a fact that the rescuers, by herding refugees into germ-trap encampments, only exacerbated. The famine had peaked in the summer of 1992; by the time Operation Restore Hope was underway, some regions were seeing food *surpluses*. Somali farmers started having trouble selling their harvest because their prices were being undercut by the aid shipments. "Nobody is interested," one farmer who could not sell her corn told the *New York Times*. "Everybody has his own relief supply."[20]

With military intervention came human rights abuses; Somalis, it seemed, had no monopoly on brutality. The London-based human rights organization African Rights has published a 35-page report on abuses by the multilateral forces.[21] On June 17, 1993, a combined force of Moroccan, French, and U.S. forces attacked Digfer hospital in the centre of Mogadishu, killing at least nine patients and other civilians" and causing significant physical damage. On July 12, US forces launched a morning aerial bombing of Abdi Abducts house in midtown Mogadishu while 80 people met inside. The UN asserted the gathering was a war council; Aidid's group says it was a peace and reconciliation meeting. The attack took place in a busy part of town on a busy morning, killing

18. Quoted in Keith B. Richburg, "In Africa, Lost Lives, Lost Dollars," in *The Washington Post (*September 21, 1992).

19. *Ibid.*

20. Quoted in Tom Bethell, "Exporting Famine," in *American Spectator* (December 1993).

21. "Somalia: Human Rights Abuses by the United Nations Forces," in *African Rights* (July 1993).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at least 54 people, including clan leaders, children, and a pregnant woman.

Several individual Somalis have been killed by trigger-happy foreigners. In one incident, a man looking for a relative at the Mogadishu University compound was shot by American soldiers who mistook him for a sniper. Rather than admit their error or reprimand the killers, the UN reported the incident as the killing of a "bandit." There have been two attacks on civilian demonstrators by Pakistani soldiers, who at one point fired directly into a crowd with a belt-fed machine gun. Between three and seven cases have been confirmed of Belgian soldiers throwing children into the Juba River. A confirmed pattern exists of forced relocations, random beatings, harassment of civilians, and "preventative detention" at the hands of UN troops.

"Operation Restore Hope was heralded as a new type of military operation," the report concluded, "in which armies trained to kill and destroy would be used for humanitarian purposes . . . . Whatever the motives, the intervention has gone badly wrong, and a chief culprit for the disaster has to be the behavior of individual soldiers assigned to UNOSOM [United Nations Operation for Somalia], and the attitude of their commanders."[22] But while the UN and other government-funded charities (e.g. CARE) stumbled, other relief operations did relatively well.

The original justification for intervention had been to guard food and medicine shipments from looters, who allegedly were taking 80% of the aid agencies' cargo. But private relief agencies such as the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and Save the Children (UK) were only losing 10-20% of their shipments, shipments which exceeded the UN's to begin with. Much of the diversions consisted not of armed banditry but of corruption within the distributing agencies and contractors.[23] Meanwhile, even as the Mogadishu port was closed to the UN, it remained open to the International Red Cross, which successfully pursued a strategy of bilateral negotiations with both Ali Mahdi's forces and those of Farrah Aidid.[24]

Of the international aid agencies, Save the Children (UK) achieved remarkable success by *working through local groups wherever possible*, in a deliberate effort to strengthen grassroots institutions. But it was those domestic, grassroots institutions that responded most ably to the crisis. The Somali Red Crescent Society was responsible for more successful relief than all external efforts put together.[25] This is not unusual: "In all recent famines in Africa, international food aid has played a relatively marginal role. In Sudan in 1984-5, for example, it provided no more than about twelve per cent of the diet of the

22. *Ibid.*
23. "Somalia — Operation Restore Hope: A Preliminary Assessment," in *African Rights* (May 1993).
24. *Ibid.*
25. Personal interview with Alex de Waal, in *African Rights* (October 29, 1993).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people in the famine-stricken areas. The remainder came from the efforts of the affected people themselves, and the charity of local individual and organizations. In few famines has the figure of 20% of food provided by international agencies been exceeded. . . . War famines usually cause many more deaths than peacetime famines, precisely because war makes it impossible for people to carry on their ordinary social and economic activities. This makes it doubly important for emergency programmes in war famines to go beyond providing relief to removing the blocks on self-help."[26] But the *modus operandi* of the UN was not to try to restore the tapestry of everyday Somali life. It was to disrupt what remains of that life, by undercutting local markets with uncontrolled free food; by herding nomads into unproductive, disease-ridden refugee camps; by disarming civilians while leaving the gangsters' stockpiles largely untouched; by adding to the civil war's body count.

Conclusions

"Somalia is an African problem, requiring an African solution," writes Ghana native George B.N. Ayittey of American University. "While the U.S. and other nations can help, . . . [l]ocal and regional initiatives should actively be sought, encouraged, and supported."[27] Observers can probably go even further. Somalia is a *Somali* problem, one which Somalis are best-equipped to deal with. Indeed, they are already solving this problem, despite the counterproductive efforts of their foreign "helpers." This is not to say that international assistance is not useful or necessary. But the aid which has worked has emerged from the bottom-up approach of Save the Children and the Red Crescent Society, private organizations staffed by committed volunteers. Officials of the UN, the World Bank, and foreign governments have tended either to shun this approach or meet the fate of Mohammed Sahnoun. Military occupation was an almost universally acknowledged disaster.

Somalia's problems are rooted in a century of meddling — by British and Italian imperialists, international "development" experts, the homegrown dictatorship of Siad Barre, Barre's Soviet and American benefactors, and by the UN. Where the country has progressed, it has done so because of the efforts of its own people, acting freely and creatively. If a stable order of free markets and self-government is ever to come to Somalia, it must be built on this foundation.

In the final analysis, the present inter- and intra-clan warfare represents not the last gasp of outmoded indigenous institutions but of the totalitarian Barre dictatorship. Traditional Somali society is the solution, not the problem. It was Somaliland's president, advised by former Barre aides, who engineered the clan warfare in northern Somalia; it was clan elders who negotiated a settlement.

---

26. Somalia — Operation Restore Hope: A Preliminary Assessment, *op. cit.*

27. George B.N. Ayittey, "An African Solution for Somalia," in *The Wall Street Journal* (October 7, 1993).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The warfare in southern Somalia was the politics of the Barre régime carried out by other means. Local initiative is the key to solving that crisis as well.

The US withdrew its troops from Somalia in March of 1994, in response to a well-founded concern for the safety of its soldiers stationed there. Other nations soon began to reconsider their roles in the Somali mess as well. Germany fell under a "pall of dissatisfaction" with its confused intervention, an ill-defined mission marred by a series of mishaps (e.g., having to purchase tropical uniforms from the French because they had no apparel fit for the Somali climate) and a general indecisiveness over what exactly its troops were in Africa to do.[28] Belgium was marred with the taint of serious human rights abuses, revealed by its own soldiers over government radio.[29]

Finally, in early 1995, the UN's military occupation came to an end. But few world leaders seem to have learned any lasting lessons from it. If the international community really wishes to help the Third World, it should support local initiatives to build a lasting peace from the bottom up — a peace that will replace a balance of terror with a balance of trust, allow professionals living abroad to return securely to their homeland, and create a basis for a free and just political and economic order.

---

28. Achim Remde, "Agony Over German Role in Somalia," in *New African* (March 1994).

29. Radio 1, August 8, 1993.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Balance or Justice? Reply to Ost

Hugh Murray

I do not mind being criticized for what I have written, but I must challenge someone who attacks me by distorting my position. Thus David Ost in "Search for Balance" complains of what he deems a cold, uncaring trend, one that has lost the spirit of the New Left. "By proposing a federalism where each community is dominated by its own majority, *Telos* exhibits a striking coldness to those not included in these majorities. Coldness matters. When affirmative action programs are not just criticized but mocked." And Footnote 8 reads: "See the nasty review by Hugh Murray (a piece that makes Charles seem like a liberal!) titled 'The Case Against Affirmative Action,' in *Telos* 93 (Fall 1992). At one point Murray actually *assumes* the genetic inferiority of blacks, rhetorically asking, 'what proof [do] liberals have that all races . . . are equally intelligent?' (p. 155). What is such an essay doing in *Telos*?"[1] Like many true believers, Ost finds it difficult to distinguish between atheists and agnostics. Nevertheless, there is a difference. I did not assume the genetic inferiority (or superiority) of blacks. What I point out is that defenders of affirmative action (hereafter, AA) *assume* that all large racial, ethnic, religious, and even sexual groups are equally intelligent, equally talented, equally strong in all fields. On this assumption, liberals demand that the work-force, management, the academy, the media, "reflect" the complexion of America. To accomplish this, they also demand that government discriminate against groups which do well, especially against white males, occasionally white females, and more recently, Asians. (Of course, the group most overrepresented among doctors, lawyers, academics, the media, Supreme Court justices, is *not* white males, it is Jews. Yet, while the media constantly expose and denounce "white male privilege," who has seen the media mention "Jewish privilege"?)

To offset alleged white male privilege, discrimination against white men takes various forms, from race norming of tests, to reducing standards on tests so that almost everyone passes, and then using race, ethnicity, or sex as the determinant in hiring, promotion, etc. It is indicative of the bias of our media that while many praised the film "Quiz Show," about the fixing of a television program so that the preferred contestant would win, that corruption directly affected only a handful of people; but there was no outcry when the government "fixed" the

1. David Ost, "Search for Balance," *Telos* 101 (Fall 1994), p. 139.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scores of millions of average people through race norming, secretly granting extra points to blacks and Hispanics, that affected the scores of millions. These scores had consequences. By depriving better qualified whites of jobs, it probably ruined the lives of thousands, and shriveled the lives of millions. Can we expect Robert Redford to film an *exposé* of how the government thus cheated poorer white Americans? Indeed, when race norming was finally exposed, liberals first sought to cover up the scandal, and then many justified the fix. What Ost and liberals try to suppress is that affirmative action for some is negative action for others. I merely argue that it is unjust for government to impose negative action against some of its citizens because of race, religion, ethnicity, or gender.

Liberals declare all groups are equally endowed with natural talent. Since society does not reflect that declaration, in so far as some are rich and others poor and the bell curves of wealth are unequal among the races, liberals hypothesize that the cause of such inequality must be "institutional racism" and "institutional sexism." However, are institutional racism and sexism causes, or are they fictitious explanations posited by liberals because society fails to conform to their premises? Why not question the liberal premises, instead? Worse, to cure a fictitious institutional racism and institutional sexism, the liberals have *institutionalized* racism and sexism and called it affirmative action!

I did not state, nor did I assume, that blacks as a group are genetically inferior to whites or anyone else. But for a factual statement as to the intelligence and other possible variations among the races, we should consult scientists. AA, which presupposes the liberal view that all large groups are equal, does *not* seem based on scientific evidence. Most of the evidence collected supports the view that blacks, as a group, are not as intelligent as other races.[2] It is also noteworthy that liberal social "scientists" are usually the first to object to the funding of any scientific research that might prove or disprove genetic-based differentials among the races in intelligence. Thus, decades ago when William Shockley proposed an investigation of black-white differences in intelligence, liberals shouted him down. In reply, liberals say, "We don't want to know. We prefer our comfortable belief!" Today's liberal scientists are about as scientific as the churchmen who persecuted Galileo and the party faithful who praised Lysenko.

I am not a scientist and decline to say anything about whether blacks as a race are equally intelligent as whites as a race. I do *not* claim that they are unequal. Measuring the bell curves of whites, blacks, yellows, browns, provides information but inconclusive proof. All the evidence is not in. Therefore, on the question of intellectual differences among the races, I remain agnostic.

---

2. See Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); J. Phillippe Rushton, *Race Evolution and Behavior: A Life History* (New Brunswick, N. J.:,Transaction Publishers, 1995); Mark Snyderman and Stanley Rothman, *The I.Q. Controversy the Media and Public Policy* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Transaction Books, 1988).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But on another topic, I am neither agnostic, nor "cold"; I am passionate in my view that the government should treat all its citizens fairly, equally, *not* as groups, but as individuals. Were the government to do this, bell curves and average IQs of blacks, whites, reds, greens, suddenly would become irrelevant. Only the individual black, white, yellow, brown, would count. But precisely this individualist approach is anathema to the defenders of AA. Equal racial IQs are the unproven premise on which liberals have erected the AA structure that mistreats individuals by treating them as members of groups, and treating the groups differently, in order that the outcome, according to groups, will be the same. Since the liberal policy rests on this premise, should not liberals prove it? The burden of proof is on them, though they have shirked that duty in favor of smearing their opponents. Of course, I am considered "nasty" for raising this taboo question. And it is taboo because many liberals realize that their entire structure is built not on scientific fact, but on ideological faith.

At a meeting of the ACLU in Louisiana in the late 1950s, in the days of legalized, enforced segregation, I argued that *even if* blacks as a group were not equal in intelligence to whites as a group, they deserved equal opportunity and segregation should be abolished. The government should treat all citizens equally. Bell curves are irrelevant. That remains my view. The *even if* clause should apply to all.

Of course, political correctness has its pernicious influence on American life. It is often said that hypocrisy is the homage vice pays to virtue. Clearly, this is not the case regarding AA. More often, hypocrisy is the extortion demanded from the fearful by the powerful. Occasionally, it is the performance by the cynical before the ignorant. While many supporters of AA base their view on the genetic equality of all large groups, other supporters of AA believe just the opposite. Their view is we must discriminate in favor of blacks and Hispanics because they are too dumb to succeed without special preferences. This is never openly stated. Or when it is uttered, as occurred last year by the president of Rutgers University, Francis L. Lawrence (an enforcer of wide-ranging, affirmative action programs), then the heretic is stoned. One should recall, however, that the man who made AA national policy for blacks, women, Hispanics, Asians, Indians, was President Richard Nixon. Was he a believer or a hypocritical cynic? Political correctness prefers true believers, but it settles for hypocrites. However, it detests the agnostics, like myself, and possible "atheists," like Charles Murray. Nevertheless, the non-believers expose the facts, the emperor has no clothes; the brains of men and women are different; the bell curves of the races may also be so.[3]

---

3. I do not claim that all governmental policies must be grounded in science. There are questions that science may not yet, or may never adequately answer. And to complicate matters, though they may overlap, the realm of values and science are distinct. See my "Nazi Science," in *Polity* (Spring 1990), pp. 545-56; "Science, Reason, and the German Utopia," *Journal of Unconventional History* (Fall 1989), pp. 33-51; and my review of Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* in *German Politics and Society* (Spring 1990), pp. 82-86.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ost also writes: "Class-based critiques lead to a more inclusive polity precisely because they target their enemies on an abstract rather than concrete basis. Unlike nationalist, communitarian, religious, racial, or ethnic antagonisms, which exclude whole categories of people from citizenship on the basis of attributes one can do nothing about, class-based antagonisms target only an abstract distributional arrangement as the problem. Thus, they can be resolved by adjusting the economic system, rather than, say, by expelling Moslems from Bosnia."[4]

But AA is based on some of the very categories Ost recognizes as the false approach: racial, national, religious, ethnic, and even gender categories.[5] It is because white men are white men that liberals deem them "privileged," and worthy of official discrimination. AA is the denial of due process under the 14th Amendment to a class of citizens. It is almost the denial of citizenship to white men! Certainly, it is the denial of their civil rights and equal opportunity.

Thus, the arrogance of Ost when he writes, "many white males are facing a difficult time today. But they are oppressed not because they are white and not because they are male."[6] Clearly, Ost is blinded by his liberalism. A dean of a

---

4. Ost, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

5. *Telos* wondered if there was a "Telos" (presumably a New Left) left in *Telos* in its special issue to which Ost contributed his essay. I wonder if there is any notion of class left in the Left? The New Left, like Ost, first emphasized race, gender, ethnicity, orientation, in conjunction with, and then to the exclusion of, class. This is why the Left defends AA which, by definition, sees the poorest white teen as "a privileged white male" and deserving of discrimination. This trend to replace class with race, etc., was signalled when *Studies on the Left*, a flagship journal of the New Left, published Harold Cruse's "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American," in Vol. II, No. 3 (1962), pp. 12-25, and the criticism and defense of it in the following number, especially Richard Greenleaf's "Studies on the Right?" and Cruse's reply, in Vol. III, No. 1 (1962), pp. 57-65. Cruse expanded his analysis in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Morrow, 1967). My attack on Cruse, "The Scandal of the Intellectuals," was published in my *Civil Rights History-Writing and Anti-Communism: A Critique* (New York: American Institute for Marxist Studies, 1975). As many leftists and liberals neglected, and then discredited, demoralized, and finally demonized poor white men, many poor whites naturally opposed the Left; many embraced the new populism instead. And as many liberals despise a white belly in a blue collar with a red neck — the red, white, and blue — those working class whites increasingly reject the Democratic Party and view the federal government with its liberal regulators as enemies, occasionally as tyrannical foes. There are some like Richard Kahlenberg who hope to save AA with a fall-back position of including poor whites as an additional protected class along with all Blacks, Hispanics, women, etc.; see *The New Republic* (April 3, 1995). However, who would enforce such a policy? The same EEOC that has for 30 years plotted to administer AA schemes that discriminate most notoriously against poor white men! Kahlenberg's proposal is like having anti-segregation laws enforced by the KKK! Furthermore, the entire policy of class-based AA proved to be a failure in Eastern Europe. Why should America repeat socialism's failed experiments? Lincoln Steffens visited the early Soviet state and announced he had seen the future and it worked. Steffens has been proven wrong on both counts.

6. Ost, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

college phones me long distance, interviews me, and then asks, "How can I put this delicately, are you black?" I respond that I am white. He then declares that he has to hire a black, and the conversation ends. Or a college personnel official writes me: ". . . if you are black send your credentials to . . ." Or, story after story. I am denied work because I am white and male. I know discrimination when I encounter it, even if Ost ignores it or justifies it.

Many liberals assert that white men are privileged and imply that they thus deserve to suffer being passed over. True, some white men are privileged. However, it is often the white men who *are* privileged who support AA. Thus, Senators Ted Kennedy (Dem.), John Danforth (Rep.), and Howard Metzenbaum (Dem.) were staunch supporters of the pro-affirmative action Civil Rights Act of 1991, which was signed by Republican President Bush. All of them are millionaires. But the law effectively discriminates against poor, working-class, and middle-class whites. Rich liberals, Democrats and Republicans, do not have to worry if their children are denied a scholarship, or a job, or a promotion. They salve their consciences by slamming the door of opportunity on less fortunate whites.

Ost may sneer at my response as the ravings of a racist. But if he would read Adam Fairclough's new work, *Race and Democracy* he will note that I was very active in the civil rights movement in that state.[7] Unlike many liberals, I put my body on the line to end racist discrimination, and I was arrested in the first sit-in in my native New Orleans in 1960. There, I further risked additional arrests in numerous protests. But I did not sacrifice for so many years in order to be denied equal opportunity *because* I am a white man. Yet, that is what has happened. And not just to me, but to many others. Of course, liberal academia pretends we do not exist or that we are privileged!

My mother graduated from eighth grade; my father quit school after the third. I was the first in the family to attend the university. And while I have taught at universities in three countries and published in countless journals, whenever I apply for a teaching post, the main questions come down to my race, my gender. I publish *and* perish. Meanwhile, the "prolific" Professor Leonard Jeffries has had tenure since the early days of AA.

Ost searched for balance. I observe the scientific scales, but demand that the scales of justice remain balanced. I demand that she retain her blindfold and remain oblivious to an applicant's or a defendant's color, and that the government not tip the balance against white men, or Asian women, or black teens, or any other group. Justice requires the immediate abolition of affirmative action.

---

7. Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana 1915-1972* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1995), pp. xiii, xxiv, 272, 274, 276, 295, 431-33, 528, 548.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Resilience of Left and Right: Reply to Alain de Benoist

Ivan Ascher

Alain de Benoist offers an insightful account of important changes that have taken place in recent years in French political discourse.[1] The focus (and the title) of his article, however, are misleading, for they draw attention to a manifestation of these changes, not to their cause. Though the categories of Left and Right have undoubtedly fallen out of favor in France, the blurring of these categories should not cloud our perception of the larger dynamics at play, or lead us to mistake a temporary weakening of the Left-Right dichotomy for its final eradication.

As Benoist points at the outset, the Left-Right dichotomy appears discredited even among certain advocates of traditionally "leftist" ideas. Before the parliamentary elections in 1993, for instance, the socialist Jacques Delors described the Left-Right cleavage as "more and more absurd."[2] Michel Rocard — at the time still expected to run for president in 1995 — quoted Maréchal Foch at a rally of the Socialist Party, saying: "[m]y Center is collapsing, my right is receding, this is an excellent situation, I attack!" Explaining that "in this multiform reality, the cleavages are various,"[3] Rocard was clearly moving away from an outdated electoral rhetoric of a "*Union de la Gauche*," and called instead for "a vast movement, open and modern, extroverted, rich in its diversity and even fostering it."

This change in electoral rhetoric and its departure from the symbolic structure of Left and Right were of course not limited to the Socialist camp. At about the same time, the two principal environmentalist parties — "*Les Verts*" and "*Generation Ecologie*" (GE) — formed a coalition that claimed to be "neither Right nor Left," but "forward." Two thirds of their electorate associated themselves with the Left, but the parties' ideology borrowed from all sides. This heterogeneity was reflected among the coalition's leaders, for although Brice Lalonde (GE) was once a member of the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), the Alsacian fundamentalist Antoine Wächter (*Les Verts*) boasted that "the treasure [of his party], for the last twenty years, has been independence," and added: "Are you capable of leaving your binary vision of the political world? Are you capable

1. Alain de Benoist, "End of the Left-Right Dichotomy: The French Case," in *Telos* 102 (Winter 1995), pp. 73-90.
2. *Le Monde (*Februaly 15, 1993).
3. *Le Monde* (February 19, 1993).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of admitting the Left-Right cleavage is outdated. . . . The peoples of the Right and the Left no longer exist, and it is for the better."

One could find countless more politicians declaring the death of the Left and the Right, all supporting Benoist's already compelling statistics showing the electorate's disenchantment with categories of Left and Right. Neither the quotes nor the statistics, however, explain the origins of this disenchantment, or even tell whether this change of mood is permanent — two questions which ought to be addressed.

Two possible explanations for the discrediting of the Left-Right dichotomy come to mind, and both are found (though in an understated fashion) in Benoist's article. First, "as soon as they come to power Right and Left seem increasingly inclined to adopt the same policies" (p. 86). Second, "all the debates of the last few years have produced conflicts impossible to account for in terms of the traditional dichotomy" (p. 88). What Benoist fails to emphasize is that these realities are not the proof or even the consequence of the end of a symbolic order, but are instead the consequence of two distinct phenomena: the failure of the ruling elite to fulfill its promises (many might argue this has been the failure of the Left in particular), and the emergence of a new economic and geopolitical configuration. In other words, and contrary to what Benoist suggests, it is not that the Left- Right dichotomy of has collapsed, but that the realities which it symbolizes have dramatically changed.

Unlike political priorities and allegiances, symbolic structures are not easily dismantled. The Left-Right dichotomy has a number of attributes which should permit it to survive the current reconfiguration of the French political map:

• First, the categories of Left and Right have acquired in their institutional embodiment a great deal of stability. The very electoral process, for instance, is based on a mode of selection very compatible with a Left-Right conceptualization of politics.

• Second, in addition to conveniently offering two opposite poles, the Left-Right structure has the attractive attribute of being a *continuum*. This characteristic of the Left-Right symbolic order (not shared for instance by its liberal v. conservative equivalent in the US) allows for any idea to be positioned relative to another along a single axis. It also allows the whole symbolic structure to shift when necessary, thereby surviving any 'real' shift of the electorate in either direction.

• Third, because it is so stable and appealing to the political mind, the Left-Right spectrum provides a scale of normalcy in which political actors are inscribed. Unconventional parties need to be coded along the spectrum if they wish to gain legitimacy in the eyes of mainstream political culture, as is illustrated by Jean-Marie Le Pen's claims that his Front National (FN) embodies the political Right, rather than the far Right (of which most would recognize he is, but the label of which would place him near the limits of political acceptability).

• Finally, as Benoist's article suggests, the Left-Right dichotomy is very malleable semantically. It has been able, over the two hundred years of its existence to accommodate several divisions in French political life, successively pitting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Republicans against monarchists, secularists against Catholics, proletariat against bourgeoisie. There is no reason why it should be unable to symbolize more rifts in years to come. As new issues arise, their various elements will gradually be coded as being of the Left or the Right, and political identities will be formed in consequence. This process is certainly not evident, but its existence is undeniable.

In a study of the structures of political symbolism in Germany, Jürgen Link evokes, for instance, the catastrophe at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in Ukraine and writes: "if the flow of isotopes is communist, it comes from the 'extreme-Left.' The boat must therefore turn to the Right."[4] In France, the question arises similarly: how will the various sources of anxiety of the electorate will be coded in the collective symbolism of the national political culture? Will the presumably 'apolitical' spread of AIDS, like the 'flow of immigrants,' be coded as originating from the Left, and therefore prompt people to vote for the Right? This will depend on what specific policies and ideological stances political actors adopt on the issue, and on what cultural myths they choose to manipulate. One thing is certain, however: the real question is not whether the Left-Right dichotomy "has had its day" (p. 88), but when and in what form it will return. The answer to this will appear slowly, as institutions begin to change and the political class acquires new credibility, and as new issues become coded politically in the dormant but always resilient structure of Left and Right.

---

4. Jürgen Link, "Le symbolisme politique en Allemagne et l'avenir du courant néo-raciste," in *L'Homme et la Société,* Vol. I, No. 103 (1992), p. 47.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*In Search of Right and Left**

Marco Tarchi

Viable conceptual distinctions must be grounded on explicit criteria and must generate exclusive categories.[1] Various attempts to classify ideologies as Right and Left (and Center)[2] have seldom, if ever, met these criteria and the results have usually been hopeless aporias.[3] Attempts of this type are not new. Those familiar with Zeev Sternhell's work on the "third way" in France in the late 1890s and early 1900s[4] will recall how the rejection of these political and cultural categories constituted a precarious point of convergence for the "1930s non-conformists" and their forerunners: syndacalists, national-populists and aristocratic socialists.[5] This state of affairs already betrays the widespread perception of these concepts as inadequate and obsolete. Yet their durability and the political failures of those who thought they could dispense with them send a different signal — one of vitality and endurance, which in turn is challenged by the continuous reemergence of polemics and doubts.

In discussing the relevance of these concepts, it is useful to recall the early 1960s' claims of the advocates of "the end of ideology." This thesis was accepted within a context which assumed that in the age of technology it was finally possible to delegate decisions to technocrats and to an updated "invisible hand" no longer identified with the market but with administrative bureaucracies. It was

---

* Originally published in *Democrazia e Diritto*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1 (January-March 1994), pp. 381-396. Translated by Franco Sacchi.

1. Stefano Bartolini, "Metodologia della Ricerca Politica," in Gianfranco Pasquino, ed., *Manuale di Scienza Politica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), p. 58.

2. According to Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, "L'Opposizione Destra-Sinistra. Riflessioni Analitiche," in *La Destra Radicale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1984), p. 266, the Center is a by-product of the distance between Right and Left. Cf. also Massimo Cacciari, "Sinisteritas," in *Il Concetto di Sinistra* (Milan, Bompiani, 1982), pp. 7-19.

3. Norberto Bobbio's successful pamphlet is the most recent example. See Norberto Bobbio, *Destra e Sinistra. Ragioni e Significati di una Distinzione Politica* (Rome: Donzelli, 1994). According to the publisher, sixty thousand copies of this pamphlet sold during the first twenty days following its publication. See Mauro Anselmo, "Il Filosofo Best-Seller. Perché in Libreria Bobbio Batte Tutti?" in *La Stampa* (April 24, 1994)), p. 16.

4. Zeev Sternhell, *Ni Droite Ni Gauche* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

5. See Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes des Annés Trente* (Paris: Seuil, 1970) and Zeev Sternhell, *La Droite Revolutionnaire: 1885-1914* (Paris: Seuil, 1978).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

predicated on the decline of political functions and the assumption that, as a result, value conflicts would become superfluous. As Dino Cofrancesco has pointed out, the increasing homogenization of the new era seemed to turn the end of ideologies into a "final solution" because "the elimination of various attitudes about events would produce the sterile and nightmarish world so often envisioned by science fiction writers."[6]

Although usually assumed by intellectuals and the mass media, the thesis of a radical de-ideologization of public life[7] has turned out to be useless.[8] Those who still regard ideologies as viable, frequently use the categories of Right, Center and Left in three ways: a) as *essences* embodying fundamental political beliefs; b) as *ideal types* defining rigorous theoretical divisions but not directly applicable to concrete experience; c) as *relative conventions* applicable to particular situations but lacking sharp bounderies.

The effectiveness of each of these approaches is a function of the context within which they are deployed. Thus, it is not unusual for scholars to shift from one to the other. Indicative of the difficulty to pigeon-hole new political phenomena such as the so-called New Right is Anna Galeotti's attempt to reject "the pretense of the contemporary Right to locate itself beyond classical distinctions."[9] She identifies three fundamental questions: "1) Is there an adequate and univocal definition of Right and Left? 2) If not: does the distinction mean anything more than it does in everyday life? 3) If yes, is this division useful in interpreting contemporary political phenomena?"[10]

Two other questions ought to be asked: Does this distinction help explain political behavior? Does it exclude other distinctions? Essentialist perspectives according to which Right and Left are two metaphysically grounded and irreducible entities have often been abandoned, simply to re-emerge under new guises. Sartori has demolished the pretenses of identifying the two concepts in terms of property rights, social change or class,[11] and Bobbio has dismissed attempts to ground the distinction on the individualism-organicism dichotomy, since it "cannot withstand historical scrutiny — not even a superficial one." According to him, "the reactionary Right and, in part, the conservative Right, has an organicist vision of society which, to cite recent examples, reveals itself by emphasizing the

---

6. Dino Cofrancesco, *Destra e Sinistra. Per un Uso Critico di due Termini Chiave* (Verona: Bertani, 1984), p. 14.

7. Daniel Bell has provided a more articulate version of this thesis in his *The End of Ideology* (New York: Collier, 1962).

8. See Marco Tarchi, "Dinamica della Trasgressione: dal 'Né Destra né Sinistra' al "e Destra e Sinistra'," in *Trasgressioni*, No. 1, 1986.

9. See Giovanni Tassani, *Vista da Sinistra. Ricognizioni sulla Nuova Destra* (Florence: Arnaud, 1986); and Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droit* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1994).

10. Galeotti, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

11. Giovanni Sartori, *Teorie dei Partiti e Caso Italiano* (Milan: SugarCo, 1982), pp. 145-6.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

principle of solidarity contraposed to that of aggregation on the basis of common interests, the need to integrate single individuals into the group even at the cost of personal sacrifice and, finally, the concept that the whole comes before the parts and that the parts do not count outside the whole. Yet it cannot be denied that an organic concept of society has been accepted by part of the Left and the labor movement as a polemical answer to individualistic theories disdainfully labelled atomistic, 'bourgeois' and so on."[12]

While not universally shared, there is broad agreement among scholars concerning the impossibility of identifying the distinction between Right and Left with the one between conservatism and progressivism. Yet this thesis often reappears in different guises. Bobbio himself has proposed one of the most authoritative versions, based on different attitudes towards equality. In the context of relative beliefs (where the Right loses its pretense of metaphysical inequality, and the Left that of an equally undemonstrable natural equality) the ideal of equality translates into preferences, which can be expressed as follows: "In general the egalitarian thinks that most inequalities that bother him and that he wants to eliminate are social and therefore removable; the non-egalitarian, on the contrary, thinks they are natural and therefore irremovable."[13]

The exclusion of any third option prevents the application of this hypothesis. It cannot accomodate ideologies which, assuming natural inequalities as an anthropological given (subsequently developed into a theory of differences *qua* specificities) have sought to reduce social inequalities. In these cases, the shift of emphasis from the natural order to cultural development has generated much more substantial results than Bobbio's distinction. What this suggests is that there may be a much wider spectrum of transversal attitudes than can be captured by the Right-Left scheme.

If, following Bobbio, one identifies a "moral choice" in the preference for either equality or inequality, things become even more problematic. One can acknowledge what Pietro Barcellona has called a "tragedy of inequality" meant paradoxically to guarantee "the diversity, individuality and autonomy of the will," while at the same time rejecting all hierarchies. Different questions are raised by Cofrancesco's position. Interpreting tradition and emancipation as "two values deeply rooted in the human soul but often in conflict," he sees the Right as implying a "loyalty to tradition, however understood and realized," and "the Left as the obligation to demolish political and economic privileges."[14] Overlooking the questionable equation of tradition and privilege, this static analysis reduces the two concepts to stereotypes which miss their internal dynamic.

---

12. Norberto Bobbio, "Per una Definizione della Destra Reazionaria," in *Fascismo Oggi. Nuova Destra e Cultura Reazionaria negli Anni Ottanta* (Cuneo: Instituto Storico della Resistenza, 1983), pp. 22-23.

13. Ibid., p. 26. This is a formulation substantially similar to the one found in Bobbio's *Destra e Sinistra*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

14. Cofrancesco, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cofrancesco anticipates some objections. Yet his reasoning remains circular. The argument based on the subjectivity of political actors is not convincing. The confusion between "ideal behavioral orientations and concrete political programs in which those orientations are translated," whereby "a political program can be *objectively* conservative in some respects, but *subjectively* leftist in others" confirms the relativity of political topographies based on simplistic positions rather than on coherent *Weltanschauungen*. Consider those originaly leftist movements in defense of the quality of life. They soon generated the suspicion of using regressive ideologies that turn out to be "invectives against modern civilization, seen as the mother of all catastrophies" within a perspective that Cofrancesco would not hesitate to define rightist. Thus they have been accused of advocating "a new kind of conservative ideology seeking to deny and annihilate the political dimension as inconsistent and superfluous" (Marramao) and therefore of appropriating the critique of "realism" historically deployed by the liberal-democratic Left.[15]

This contradiction reveals a further division within Cofrancesco's dichotomy of classic and romantic attitudes: "The classic attitude approaches political interactions as a critical spectator, paying attention to what is constant, interested primarily in analyzing, distinguishing and classifying. The second one, on the contrary, is immersed in politics and tends to elevate to an infallible criterion of truth the emotions and hopes it generates."[16] Even if such were the case, how can one tell which one of these two levels is dominant in each given situation? In other words, who knows whether a "Left romantic" is closer to a "Right romantic" or to a "Left classic" when it comes to crucial decisions, i.e., to translate a subjective state of mind into action?

Cofrancesco's definition overlooks the continuous interpenetration of positions the course of the events forces on both camps. It fits well two groups still troubled by the trauma of modernization (seen either as progress by the Left or decadence by the Right); but it does not take into account what has happened since. How can those "ethical ideals and models of coexistence be realized in the future" Cofrancesco vindicates as the patrimony of a rational Left against Alain de Benoist's accusations of "infantile idolization" be defended against pre-indus-trial and organicistic objections concerning the negative impact of progress? And to what extent can the Right be identified with "the idealization of a hierarchical and patriarchal community in which the division of roles and the attribution of prestige and authority followed criteria very different from modern societies"?[17]

If the essentialist reading of the opposition Right-Left betrays these obvious

---

15. Both evaluations can be found in Rosellina Balbi, "Vecchie Carte da Gioco," in *La Republica* (November 29, 1984), p. 4. On the alleged "rightist" connotations of the Green's thought, see *Luc Ferry, Le Nouvel Ordre Ecologique* (Paris: Grasset, 1993), p. 20.

16. Cofrancesco, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

17. Cofrancesco, "La Nuova Destra dinanzi al Fascismo," in *Fascismo Oggi . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inadequacies, approaches seeking to redeploy these two concepts as ideal-types are not much more successful. Without claiming to be descriptive, these approaches justify themselves as conceptual tools useful to explain and simplify more complex realities. Galeotti finds them particularly useful in the analysis of ideologies and methodologies of the social sciences, where they become the "guiding ground for reseearch." In this context, Right and Left help situate actors within a concrete political context. According to Galeotti, this line is as follows: "Left= socialism=lower classes= goverment intervention and, on the other side, Right= conservatism=higher classes=total privatization of the economy and the social sphere."[18] Concepts so precisely operationalized can be useful for surveys in countries with a superficial political culture such as the US, but they loose all heuristic potential in more complex environments. If the effectiveness of these modes of representation is determined by the context in which they are used, they will be relatively useless in Europe today. If the Right and the Left are like linguistic games in everyday life, they risk being manipulated by a mass media orchestrated by different competing groups.

This leads back to the question concerning the plausibility of the two categories as guiding models for political analysis. If Right and Left are theoretical constructs corresponding to no particular empirical reality, why evoke them when the split on which they are based does not help classify the subjects to whom they are to be applied? To avoid transforming them into Trojan horses for value judgments, these ideal-types should be assigned a merely prescriptive function in defining abstract normative frameworks, transgressions of which generate observable and ultimately measurable phenomena. In this sense, Right, Center and Left classify ideologies and not behaviors, measuring, at best, the distance of the former from the latter.

Galeotti's error lays in claiming it is possible "to propose a definition of these two terms that allows a meaningful binary classification of the entire post-French Revolution ideological production,"[19] even if it may not be the only possible one. According to her, "the French Revolution has led to a rotation of the axis of imaginary representation of the political dimension from a vertical to a horizontal position, where horizontality is associated with a precise ideological strategy against hierarchy and privilege." The fact that the Left has brought about this rotation and the Right has been its victim implies a retroactive use of these two categories — one presumably designating opposition to power, the other identifying with it. The Manichaeanism of this account intensifies when the outcome of the rotation is seen not as a new level of conflictuality and new behavioral norms to which Right and Left should conform, but the inauguration of a new stereotype of spatial representation identifying the Right with hierarchy and the Left with horizontality.

18. Galeotti, *op. cit.*, p. 259. See also J. A. Laponce, *Left and Right. The Topology of Political Perceptions* (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1981).

19. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This ideal-typical scheme predicated, as in Bobbio, on a contraposition based on equality (but in a stronger sense, because here the focus is not so much on inequality as on hierarchy) pretends to "derive the entire ideological framework of the Right from a fundamental anthropology, communitarian concerns, or the rejection of an ethics and a politics based on individual interests and, therefore, from the rejection of the economic dimension, of a rational dimension of politics and of the democratic method ideally conceived both as popular sovereignty and as the procedure of collective decision-making."[20] Unfortunately, history does not follow the prescriptions advocated by the French Revolution and it has reconfigured the two camps in altogether different ways. The individualism of Enlightenment democracy has succumbed to the logic of organized groups, and "the concept of society as a whole as a super-subject and the consequent devaluation of individuals as only parts and functions of the whole" have triumphed in the regimes of "really-existing socialism" rather than in the authoritarian regimes established by the opposite side. Furthermore, what George Mosse described as a process of nationalization of the masses and its plebiscitarian implications has severely weakened the verticality of the Right's principles of political organization, confining it within the dictator's charismatic personality — something similar in both Stalinism and National Socialism.

Precaution and realism suggest it may be better to avoid mechanically applying the Right-Left dichotomy to historical developments and relegating it to particular situations. There are many possible readings of this dichotomy.[21] In the early 1980s, Sartori refined the conventionalist approach as follows: "it is now clear that in European countries the Right-Left dimension is meaningful and

20. *Ibid.*, p. 269. As Bobbio has pointed out, one cannot resist noting the biased character of this representation: Galeotti's reasoning "arose within the context of an inquiry concerning the nature of the new radical Right, carried out by scholars profoundly opposed to it, in a context of inquiry which emphasized the negative aspects of the Right, by researchers presupposing liberalism to be a positive ideology." See Bobbio, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

21. Thus, Alfio Mastropaolo, writes: "Today, the Right is, in general, the party of conservatism. Thus it is made up of those satisfied with the present, who want to maintain the existing order because they hold, or think they hold, a privileged position they do not want to abandon, and even by those who want to restore an old order in which they hope to have an advantageous position. Thus there is a Right, i.e., a conservative tendency in every political, social, economic and cultural organization — even the most progressive ones." As for the Left, the term "is used to indicate the side in favor of progress and change: all those engaged in renewing the existing order rightly belong to it. A Left as a party of change thus exists in any political, social, economic and cultural organization. Of course, historical progress forces the Left to vary its content according to time, place and circumstances." Alfio Mastrropaolo, in Norberto Bobbio and Nicola Matteucci, eds., *Dizionario di Politica* (Turin: Utet, 1976), pp. 306 and 923. (These particular sections have been dropped from later editions of the *Dizionario*). Although this approach seems approximate and weak, it has the advantage of being dynamic and treating the notions as reversible and able to embrace the complexities of historical developments without becoming too abstract.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

important. An advantage of the variable Right-Left consists of its 'ability to travel' and therefore its comparability. Clearly, in each country the spatial locations of Right and Left are relative to their own space. This does not detract from the fact that the Right-Left variable remains the most 'translatable' one and, in this sense, the most comparable among different countries." He goes on to claim that "if the Right-Left dimension is important and the electorate really finds it useful, what does it mean? Rigorously speaking, nothing. Right and Left are spatial images. What is interesting is that they lack any 'semantic anchorage' and are empty containers ready to be filled with different contents. This can happen atemporally or through time. In every single time, moment or historical period, our 'spatial images' are not empty but full, i.e., they are associated with a whole series of contents. In this sense then, Right and Left "mean" something. They consist of a set of issues, a series of positions concerning controversial questions. In a nutshell, Right and Left are, case by case, syntheses of attitudes."[22]

Sartori's analysis is linked to a theory of political behavior according to which fundamental personal attitudes translate into political choices. From this viewpoint, the elimination and amplification of the distance between Right and Left are not anomalies but regularities. Realistic and flexible, the conventionalist approach emerges as the most useful for a dynamic reinterpretation of shifting political allegiances, which is one of the main legacies of the process of modernization that has transformed the European continent in the 20th century. The crises connected with the unfolding of this process have modified both beliefs and behavioral models, resulting in a "politicization of identity, a legitimacy founded largely on efficacy, a growing ability to mobilize and redistribute national resources, a broadening of political participation and a growing integration of the various social sectors."[23] Among the consequences of this metamorphosis, there is a progressive normalization of the above mentioned rotation that has moved the axis of political legitimacy from the vertical level of the holy investiture of sovereigns to the horizontal dimension of the rulers' popular elections. The secularization of power has gradually flattened the conservatives-innovators split and the antithesis tradition-emancipation has turned into a simple choice between alternative ways to manage society.

It would be too difficult and time consuming to dwell on the complexities of the relations between Right and Left throughout the 19th century — "the century of ideologies" *par excellence*.[24] Yet a tendency seems to emerge in those countries that have gone through the most traumatic experiences of socio-economic modernization. Far from settling in that social imaginary which is, for Galeotti,

---

22. Sartori, *Teoria dei Partiti e Caso Italiano*, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-256.

23. See Denis Goelden, "Moeller von den Bruck: une Stratégie de Modernisation du Conservatisme ou la modrernité à Droite," in *Revue d'Allemande*, No. 1 (1982), pp. 142-43.

24. For a summary account of this cultural and historical trajectory, see Tarchi, "Dinamica della Trasgressione . . ." *op. cit.*, pp. 18-23.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"the way in which a collective sees itself and expresses desires, fears and hopes, defining at the same time normative models of behavior and of social order," the Right-Left opposition tends to come back in mere pragmatic circumstances which blur its boundaries and modify its content. The time of polarized and irreducible types seems over. The optimism of "the noble savage" and the pessimism of "*bellum omnium contra omnes*" today rate no better than simple scholastic hypotheses. Phases of conflict and neutralization among the ideological camps designate aggregations without clear boundaries.

Those who try to analyze the process of social development of contemporary Europe with essences or ideal types connected to two inflexible categories of Right and Left risk becoming lost among a variety of Rights which can be modern and regressive, consensual and authoritarian, statist and communitarian, and Lefts caught between postmodernity and pre-modernity, the logic of mediation and decisionism, ethical fascinations and the autonomy of the political. Today it is not unusual to see the people's right of self-determination vindicated against the threat of planetary homogenization by a Western or American civilization by the historical heir of an originally colonialist nationalism, and the proposals of privatistic and neo-utilitarian projects by intellectuals and politicians with a Marxist or Leninist background.

An epoch of conventions and reversals, the present is characterized by the proliferation of the conviction that crucial future antagonisms will come about as a result of the confrontation and mixture of the patrimony of hopes and experiences of both the Right and the Left. From this perspective, "New Right" and "New Left" seem to differ from one another less than they do with respect to their own historical matrices. Today, the overcoming of rigid 19th century dichotomies is essential to interpret new metapolitical frameworks beginning to objectify themselves into empirical realities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Review:

Racism, Antiracism and the Decline of the French Left

Pierre-André Taguieff, *Les Fins de l'Antiracisme* (Paris: Éditions Michalon, 1995), 708pp. + 14.

The last two years have been difficult ones for Pierre-André Taguieff. Despite his undisputed status as one of France's leading experts on racism and right-wing politics, he has progressively run afoul of what Jean-François Kahn has called "le système intello-médiatique"[1] During the Summer of 1993, Taguieff was attacked in the "Appeal to Vigilance" controversy[2] on grounds of having helped legitimate the far Right by confusing public opinion with his complex analyses of racism and his criticism of the growing ineffectiveness of fashionable antiracism. He responded first by writing a 440 page book on the New Right,[3] then a 722 page book on antiracism, reviewed here. To the extent that they were both cut-and-paste operations, recycling material Taguieff had already published b re the polemic actually began, yet they also stand on their own as impressive and perhaps definitive scholarly monographs.

Why has Taguieff so infuriated the Parisian left-wing literati, for whom antiracism, with the rise of the Front National, became the basis of an opportunistic reconfiguration of the classic Left-Right distinction, and, in the aftermath of 1989, an *ersatz* ideological formula for the standard but no longer tenable Left doctrine of class struggle? Basically, Taguieff has contended that French antiracism is both analytically vacuous and politically ineffective: on the one hand, it fundamentally misunderstands the changing nature of racism in France; on the other, it not only fails to check the growth and consolidation of the National Front but has actually helped generate a new form of xenophobic anti-antiracism which made Le Pen's movement even more popular.

Taguieff has repeatedly argued that racism is a complex phenomenon which has from multiple causes and presents itself in multiple forms, frequently

1. Jean-François Kahn, *La Pensée Unique* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), especially Chapter Two, "Sur la Crise du Système Intello-médiatique."

2. For a complete dossier on the controversy, see the special double issue of *Telos* on the French New Right, Numbers 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994).

3. Pierre-André Taguieff, Sur *la Nouvelle Droite* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1994).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

amalgamated with such other phenomena as nationalism, populism, fascism and imperialism. For example, the anti-Semitism associated with the Holocaust (based on physical extinction) has little in common with the legacy of racial prejudice against blacks (based on economic exploitation); to consider them identical would be misleading and to anticipate some common antiracist solution which could adequately address both would be naive. And just as racism itself is complex and multiple, so too, Taguieff contends, would are forms of antiracism. Yet French antiracism, if anything, has become progressively more undifferentiated and simplistic in substance, while more dogmatic, accusatory and self-righteous in tone. In fact, more than once Taguieff suggests a direct relation between the growing vacuity and stridency of French antiracism (a "*poujadisme*" *antiraciste*). More and more, French antiracism has extended itself into a common struggle against all forms of social exclusion (where la *lutte contre l'exclusion* is substituted for the old *lutte de classe*): immigration, delinquency, feminism, homosexuality, unemployment, homelessness, Aids, hate, distrust, aggression, all things bad.[4] The suggestion here is that all partake of some (unspecified) common cause, and therefore may be solved by some (unspecified) common solution, whereas in actuality the manifest demands and interests of groups representing these "victims" are often eclectic, conflictual and contradictory. Without some transcendental abracadabra (e.g., socialism), which could in the distant future reconcile all difference, antiracism, unlike past Left myths, lacks the ground upon which the various negatives may be transformed into an overarching affirmative.

Not only is French antiracism theoretically vacuous, its diverse sources and claims are often contradictory and mutually incompatible. For example, be classic form of antiracism is based on universalism, a presumed common human nature and the "brotherhood of man" which was part of the formative vision of the United Nations. This form is hostile to the retention and defense of particularistic cultural identities, especially solidarities based on ethnic, religious or racial difference, and promotes a real homogenization based on its presumed universalism. A later form of antiracism emerged during the early 1980s in response to the National Front's campaign against immigrants, based on the slogan of "living together with our differences." This differentialist form of antiracism, however, not only stood in contradiction to the universalist form (and its French republican manifestation), it lacked any principled defense against the new differentialist form of racism promoted by the National Front, which held that a French *droit à la difference* was no less valid than differentialist communitarian claims made by Third World groups. In fact, the National Front formally rejected the legitimacy of biological racism (and its presumed hierarchy of races) and made no claims regarding the superiority of the French *vis à vis* other nations. Instead, it argued

4. One manifestation of this trend is a recent issue of *Magazine Littéraire* (July-August 1995) devoted to *les exclus*, (racism, madness, delinquency, homosexuality, unemployment, etc.).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that if Algerians have the right to be Algerians in Algeria, the French should have the right to be French in France; if Algerians have the right to preserve their difference, so do the French. In fact, appropriating the differentialist discourse of the antiracist Left, Le Pen argued that the real form of racism in France was an anti-French one which denied the integrity of French identity. The National Front set up its own "antiracist" organization based on the differentialist defense of French particularity (the AGRIF, *L'Alliance Génerale contre le Racisrne et pour le Respect de l'Identité Française et Chrétienne*). Left-wing antiracist attacked Le Pen as an old-fashioned (biological) racist and as a fascist (a particularly anachronistic "commemorative" form of antiracism, according to Taguieff, a *reductio ad Hitlerum*), neither of which hit the mark but rather tended to generate popular sympathy for Le Pen as a persecuted defender of French identity.

Beyond treating the particularities of racism-antiracism in France, Taguieff's book, like his earlier study of prejudice,[5] is encyclopedic in range. There is no doubt they will become classics in this field, just as there is no doubt that Taguieff is the preeminent scholar writing on racism today. Which raises the question as to why he is so isolated and under attack. To answer this requires a political analysis, which Taguieff himself might have pursued. The point of departure here would be the crisis of the French Left, particularly Left intellectuals. After having been the dominant party in the 1980s, the Socialists find themselves without a distinctive Left program or a traditional Left electoral base. In the May presidential elections, one would have needed an electron microscope to detect any significant programmatic difference between Jospin and Chirac, both of whom ran American-style "personality" campaigns. The Socialists no longer represent the working class but rather New Class professionals with , as it is called in France, post-materialist va1ues (like fighting against social exclusion). Most of the working class voted for Le Pen whose National Front can now claim to be the leading party of blue-collar workers, more interested in materialist than post-materialist values. This outcome shatters the classic Left-Right distinction. How can a party of the far Right get more workers' votes than the parties of the Left, how can a party of the Left legitimate itself if not on the basis of popular concerns? The crisis is no less severe for the Gaullists; six months after his victory, Chirac's approval rating is 14%, his prime minister's 12%. In an attempt at distinguishing himself from his Gaullist opponent, the conservative Balladeur, Chirac made the "social fracture" his issue, promising to end unemployment (currently at 12%), lower taxes and social security payments, give youth (the so-called Chirac generation) a new future, and, yes, combat exclusion. Recently, he announced that all of this would have to wait, that balancing the budget was his number one priority (meaning higher taxes and social security payments, and no program of social reforms). No sooner did Chirac make this announcement than Charles Pasqua, as

5. Pierre-André Taguieff, *La Force du Prejugé* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1987).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

far right as a Gaullist could be, and in the doghouse for having supported Balladeur, called for immediate action on the social fracture.

Could it be that the Right and not the Center or the Left will be the new site of populist politics? Gaullists and Socialists, the "establishment" in the words of Le Pen, are losing electoral confidence. A recent poll indicated that, despite Chirac's poor approval rating, 55% of the French did not think the Left would do any better (in fact, 46% of Left voters felt the same way). Another poll indicated that 55% of the French believed that politicians had little integrity and little concern for the public good.[6] A recent study described the contemporary state of French society as "a sociological black hole," without dynamism or optimism for the future.[7] It would seem that in this context the Left's rhetorical combat against exclusion and concern for post-materialist values, and Chirac's call for austerity, are hardly issues which will bridge the gap between the established political elites and the country. The socialists and Gaullists, whatever the programmatic differences that once separated them, are fundamentally statist. It is the state, in their view, which will create jobs, integrate immigrant teenagers in the housing projects, and eliminate social exclusion. Yet it is the statist French model, not only its advocates, which is in crisis. Racism and antiracism have to be situated within the context of this crisis, if for no other reason than that the populist "anti-system" party, the National Front, is the only force, however myopic and self-contradictory its program, which seems to be posing alternatives to to unacceptable *status quo*. Though Taguieff has written on the National Front's "national populism," and on racism-antiracism, what he needs to do now is relate these phenomena to the French statist model in crisis, and begin to speculate on how alternative non-statist political configurations might shape new approaches to race relations.

Frank Adler

6. Cited in *L'Evénement du Jeudi*, No.572 (October 19-25, 1995) , pp. 6,11.
7. Cited in *Journal Français d'Amerique* (October 27-November 9, 1995), p. 4.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finally Available in English:

Luciano Pellicani
The Genesis of Capitalism and the Origins of Modernity

Translated by James G. Colbert, Edited by Kerry Milliron

Widely acclaimed in Europe, Luciano Pellicani's classic work on the origins of capitalism is now finally available in English. Through a careful reconstruction of the historical trajectory of capitalism, Pellicani confronts not only the Marxist and the Weberian conventional wisdom about the historical preconditions for capitalist development, but most of the vast literature on the subject to demonstrate how political freedom rather than religious, climatic, geographical and other contributing factors was the *essential* precondition for capitalist development. This epoch-making phenomenon is examined in terms of the cultural context of Renaissance Europe and related to the concomitant development of modernity and its antinomies.

Beginning with the Reformation and Weber's mythological account of Calvinism, Pellicani painstakingly examines all the major explanations of the phenomena to build an argument for an open society as the one most conducive to social, economic and political well-being. The appendix carefully examines the development of capitalism in Japan to indicate how such a Eurocentric model is applicable to other societies as well.

228 pages Hardback: $ 24

Telos Press Ltd.
439 E. 12th St.
New York, NY 10009

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Latest Issues Still Available

101 ***Pan:*** *Kafka as a Populist* ***Poche:*** *The Northern League* ***Luke:*** *Politics of the Arcological Utopia* ***Berman:*** *Culture in the Conservative Revolution* ***Tucker:*** *Czech Philosophy at a Crossroad* ***Langiulli:*** *Sociology as Paradox* ***SPECIAL SECTION ON "IS THERE A "TELOS" LEFT IN TELOS? REFLECTIONS AFTER 100 ISSUES OF TELOS*** *Contributions by Robert D'Amico, Tim Luke, David Gross, John Michael, David Ost, Kevin Mattson, Jack Zipes, Paul Gottfried, and Paul Piccone*

100 ***2ND SPECIAL ISSUE ON FEDERALISM*** ***Piccone/Ulmen:*** *Federalism Rethought* ***Fleming:*** *The Federalist Principle* ***Hueglin:*** *Federalism and Subsidiarity* ***diZerega:*** *Federalism and the Dissolution of the State* ***Johnstone:*** *Fear, Freud and Federalism* ***SPECIAL SECTION ON MIGLIO:*** Contributions by Campi, Miglio, Ulmen, Piccone and Gottfried ***Dahl:*** *On the Swedish Model* ***Kreitor:*** *Response to Dahl* ***McLaughlin:*** *Luke on "Green Hustlers"* ***Luke:*** *Response to McLaughlin*

98-99 Special Double Issue on ***THE FRENCH NEW RIGHT***: ***Piccone***: *Confronting the French New Right* ***Adler***: *Left Vigilance in France* ***Taguieff***: *The Case of Alain de Benoist* ***Wegierski***: *The New Right in Europe* ***Sacchi***: *The Italian New Right* ***Benoist***: *The Idea of Empire* ***Taguieff***: *The New Right on European Identity* ***Gottfried***: *Benoist's Anti-Americanism* ***Droit***: *The Confusion of Ideas* ***Taguieff***: *A Serious Error in Analysis* ***Champetier***: *Violent Press Campaign Against the New Right* ***Vidal-Naquet***: *A Dangerous Game* ***Vingtième Siècle***: *Interview with Taguieff* ***Telos Staff***: *Interview with Alain de Benoist* ***Tucker***: *The New Jews* ***Benvenuto***: *On Italy* ***Tambini***: *Two Interviews with Bossi and Rocchetta* ***Kreitor***: *The Conservative Revolution in Sweden* ***Tucker***: *The Former Praxis International in Prague* ***Benvenuto***: *Beyond Left and Right* ***Langiulli***: *Radical Philosophy or New Class Ideology?* ***Tucker***: *Identity Crisis* ***Goetschel:*** *Judaism and Modernity* ***Morisi***: *Overcoming Alienation*

97 ***SYMPOSIUM: THE CRISIS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION***: Piccone, Luke, Gottfried, Gross, D'Amico, Mattson, DeBrizzi ***Woltermann***: *What is Paleoconservatism?* ***Durando***: *The Rediscovery of Ethnicity* ***Miglio***: *Cultural Roots of Federalism* ***Evers***: *Popular Sovereignty in Germany* ***Jacoby***: *Journalists, Cynics, Cheerleaders* ***Jacoby***: *Christopher Lasch* **SYMPOSIUM ON JACOBY'S *DOGMATIC WISDOM*** ***Gross***: *More on Tradition*

96 ***Derlugian***: *Contradictions of the Soviet Collapse* ***Zavslavsky***: *The Problem of Transition* ***Rittersporn***: *Intellectual Pre-Fabs* ***Kreitor***: *Russian Nationalism* ***Aga-Rossi***: *Origins of the Cold War* ***Ruzza et al***: *Crisis of Italian Politics* ***Benvenuto:*** *Hermes-Hestia* ***McCormack***: *On Schmitt* ***Schmitt***: *Neutralization and Depoliticization* ***Langiulli***: *Immanence of Transcendence* ***Roth***: *Weber in the 1990s* ***Woltermann***: *Italian Pseudo-Federalism*

95 ***FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF POLITICAL THEORY***: ***Piccone***: *Beyond Pseudo-Culture?* ***Adorno***: *Theory of Pseudo-Culture* ***Ulmen***: *The Concept of* Nomos ***Schmitt***: *Appropriation-Distribution-Production* ***Benoist:*** *Democracy Revisited* ***Bishay***: *Conformist Federalism* ***Palti***: *Hobsbawm's Dilemma* ***Woltermann***: *Federalism, Democracy, and the People* ***Fortmann & Roe***: *Existing Communities* ***Warren***: *The Displaced Majority*

94 ***ON TRADITIONS***: Symposium on David Gross' *The Past in Ruins* Contributions by: David *Gross, Tim Luke, Sang-Ki Kim, Jack Zipes, Deborah Cook, Robert D'Amico, John Michael, Russell Jacoby, Paul Gottfried, Theodor Adorno, Alain de Benoist & Paul Piccone* ***SPECIAL SECTION ON THE FORMER CZECHOSLOVAKIA*** Contributions by: *Rutland, Bayard, Kosik, Opat, Znoj, Chvatik, Tucker & Gellner*

93 ***Johnstone, McConkey, Piccone***: *Liberal Federalism in Canada?* ***Palaver, Ulmen, Pan***: *Schmitt's Political Theology* ***Campbell***: *The Fiscal Crisis of Post-Communist States* ***Woods***: *The Rise of the Leagues* ***Jay*** and ***Dubiel***: *In Memory of Léo Lowenthal* ***Bauman***: *Modernity, Post-Modernity and Ethics* ***Murray***: *Against Affirmative Action!* ***Zipes***: *Jewish Consciousness in Germany* ***Ely:*** The Politics of "Civil Society"?

Subscriptions cost $35 per year (4 issues) for individuals (institutions: $90). Foreign orders add 15%. Checks must be in US funds. No Canadian checks are accepted. Back issues are $13 each (institutions: $30). For subscription, back issues etc., write:

Telos Press Ltd., 431 E. 12th Street, New York NY 10009

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED